THE UNITY OF ISLAMIC ART

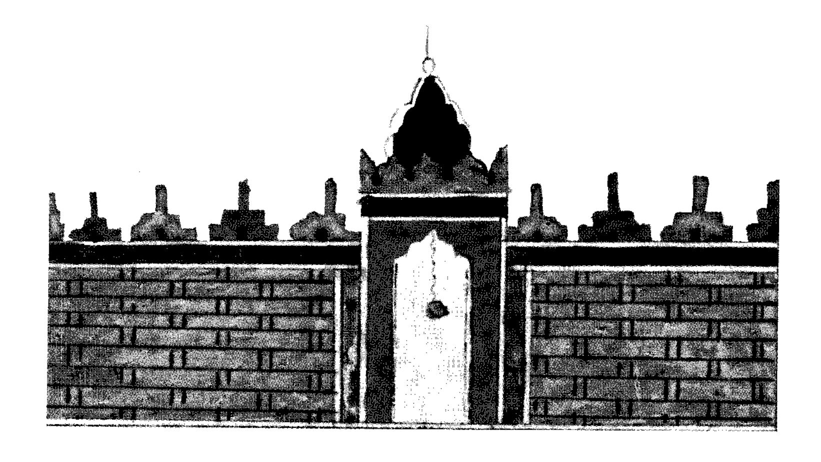




To the memory of King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz, may God bless him.

Designed by Walter Ferro. Printed by Westerham Press, Kent, England, 1985

THE UNITY OF
ISLAMIC ART



AN EXHIBITION TO INAUGURATE THE ISLAMIC ART GALLERY OF
THE KING FAISAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND ISLAMIC STUDIES
RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, 1405 AH/1985 AD

THE KING FAISAL FOUNDATION

The uniqueness of Islamic civilization can be seen in, among other things, its comprehensiveness and the unity of its components as well as in the richness and originality of its contributions to science, culture and the arts. The King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies has been established to contribute to the revitalization of this civilization and to give a true picture of its essence by spreading knowledge about Islam and promoting research and scholarship in the Islamic heritage and culture.

It has been a blessing from Allah that this exhibition, "The Unity of Islamic Art," is one of the first activities of the Center and that this catalogue is its first publication. The exhibition represents the various interests of the Center, and its theme reflects the Center's goal of furthering unity in Islamic thought and solidarity among Muslims. Needless to say, an exhibition and a catalogue of this scope would not have been possible without the assistance of a number of individuals and organizations. Therefore, on behalf of The King Faisal Foundation and The King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, I extend my thanks and gratitude to all those who have contributed to this project, especially:

Dr. Ahmed O. al-Twaijri, Academic Adviser to The King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, for supervising the exhibition and reviewing the catalogue.

His Highness Prince Bandar bin Saud bin Khalid, General Director of Public Relations, The King Faisal Foundation; Mr. Abdullah Saad al-Husain, Director of Administrative and Financial Affairs, The King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies; and Mr. Ibrahim al-Hadlag, Personal Assistant to the Director General, for their contributions.

Ahuan Islamic Art, London, and its directors, Oliver R. Hoare and David A. Sulzberger, for conceiving and organizing this exhibition.

We would also like to thank the many private collectors who have generously loaned the works of art that are exhibited; in particular, we are grateful to Mrs. Salma Es-Said for lending the collection of Islamic inlaid metalwork assembled by her late husband. The collection will be shown here publicly for the first time in the Arab world.

Dr. Esin Atıl of the Center for Asian Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., generously agreed to write the introduction, which greatly enhances our catalogue. The Center would like to thank Dr. Atıl for this time-consuming contribution.

Oliver R. Hoare wrote the descriptive text with the assistance of David A. Sulzberger and of Manijeh Bayani Wolpert, who deciphered and translated the inscriptions. This has assured the scholarly value of the catalogue.

Production of the catalogue was made possible by the invaluable advice and technical assistance of Mobil Oil Corporation. Particular thanks are due to D. Patrick Maley, General Manager, Mobil Saudi Arabia Inc. in Riyadh, and to Suzanne Wiedel-Pace, Middle East Public Affairs in New York, Editor of the catalogue with the assistance of H. Edwards. In addition, we thank Walter Ferro who designed the book, P.J. Gates who photographed the works of art, and Rowley Atterbury who oversaw production.

We also are grateful to Saudia, the Saudi Arabian national airline, for its generosity and expertise in transporting the works of art to the Kingdom for this exhibition.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the individuals and organizations who have taken part in sponsoring the exhibition and wish them all success.

DR. ZAID ABDUL MOHSEN AL-HUSAIN,
Director General, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies.

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Faisal bin Fahd al-Sudairy

Abdulaziz al-Abdullah Suleiman

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Preface

The King Faisal Foundation was established in 1976 to play a role in the revival and renaissance of Islamic civilization. Its purposes are the enhancement of Islam and the unity of Muslim peoples, as embodied in the goals and aspirations of the late King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz, may Allah bless his soul.

To achieve this, The King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies was established by the Foundation. This Center was conceived to become one of the world's outstanding institutions for research in the field of Islamic Studies.

The inauguration of the Center is accompanied by this exhibition of great works illustrating "The Unity of Islamic Art," which is being shown in the Center's two adjoining galleries, the Islamic Art Gallery and the Manuscripts Gallery.

The visitor who views the exhibition carefully will see that within its essential theme, "The Unity of Islamic Art," the show is in the truest sense three dimensional. The time factor is clear, with works of art spanning nearly all eras of Islamic history. Place is emphasized by the vast geographical area from which these works originate, extending from India to North Africa and Andalusia. Finally, the objects themselves encompass many facets of Islamic culture such as calligraphy, the decorative arts, architecture and science.

The unique composition of the exhibition and its comprehensiveness and consistency are fine reflections of the unity of Muslims in their faith, history, sciences and arts. These elements illustrate the greatness of Islamic civilization and of its contributions to humanity in all fields. It is also proof that the Islamic Solidarity Call, initiated by King Faisal, may Allah bless his soul, did not begin in a vacuum but has a firm basis in the history and heritage of the Muslim nation.

The King Faisal Foundation, with all its facilities and the ideals it represents, demonstrates the high status that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its leaders occupy in the world, and the great role it plays in leading all Muslims.

On the occasion of the opening this great exhibition and the publication of this distinguished catalogue, I extend my deep thanks and gratitude to His Majesty King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince for their continuous nurturing and support of the Foundation since its inception.

I also express my gratitude to those who supported the exhibition and assisted in its formation and pray to God that this endeavor may bear fruit for all.

KHALID AL-FAISAL BIN ABDUL AZIZ
Director General, The King Faisal Foundation

Introduction

The unity and diversity of Islamic art have been topics of serious debate among scholars and students ever since the study of Islamic civilization was formally established in academic and other learned institutions. This has led to controversies and hypotheses. Needless to say, the artistic production of the Islamic lands reveals a number of consistent features, as well as distinct regional variations and period styles. Since the arguments, whether for unity or for diversity, are often based on the physical characteristics of the objects and their surface decoration – such as inscriptions and floral, geometric, or figural elements – they can be proven or disproven depending on the examples chosen to illustrate the points.

The arguments presented here for the unity of Islamic art will take a different approach by exploring the common denominators found in Islamic artistic traditions, regardless of period or region, and analyzing the demands society made upon the artist. Since the beginning of the Islamic era, certain art forms and aesthetic approaches always have been held in high esteem and had relevance to peoples of diverse lands and social classes. The most immediately identifiable universal feature of Islamic art and Muslim society is a veneration for calligraphy. This is followed by an insistence on investing works of art with meaningful themes and symbols, and by a persistence of harmonious and refined design.

Although Islam encountered civilizations with divergent political and social systems during the course of its expansion, the new conception of the world that had crystallized with the coming of the Prophet Muhammad soon imposed its own qualities upon the conquered lands. The impact of Islam was not based on physical domination as much as on the cultural power and the inherent universality of its teaching, which accounted for its speedy and far-flung acceptance. There emerged a new community that was profoundly interested in the search for knowledge to comprehend the order and harmony of the universe as well as to express its faith. This inevitably affected the development of the arts.

Within the first century AH, following the death of the Prophet, Islam formulated an artistic vocabulary that became the unique and characteristic expression of this civilization and was unanimously accepted from the Steppes of Central Asia to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. No civilization has been able to spread through such a vast region in such a short time, uniting peoples of widely diverse

ethnic and linguistic origins under a single faith, language and artistic expression.

The strongest unifying force, second only to the faith, was Arabic, the language chosen by the Creator as a vehicle through which His Prophet communicated with mankind. It was not only the tongue, but also the script of the Holy Book, that preserved His teachings. To excel in the art of writing and to copy the Qur'an in the most beautiful and elegant hand possible became a pious act, and calligraphy evolved as the noblest of the arts.

The significance of calligraphy in Islamic civilization cannot be overstated. Thoughout the centuries, this form of art has retained the highest aesthetic and technical standards and is possibly the only tradition that has continued to be in demand and in practice by Muslims of all regions and periods. This veneration for the written word is reflected in the respect accorded the calligrapher, who was always the highest paid and most sought after of artists. The calligrapher's name appears in colophons of manuscripts (see catalogue nos. 15, 19), whereas the names of other artists are generally omitted, and the calligrapher's signature is frequently found on samples of calligraphy incorporated into imperial albums (22). In contrast to painters, potters, metalworkers and other artists of whom we know so little, voluminous treatises were written about the calligraphers, discussing their styles and giving detailed information about their lives and training as well as about their masters and apprentices. Sultans, Shahs and influential statesmen also practiced the art of calligraphy and spent years with celebrated masters to perfect their own techniques. Following the calligraphers' models, they transcribed the Qur'an and wrote verses on single sheets, which were incorporated into albums or framed and hung on walls.

The great devotion shown to the copying of the Qur'an had a long-lasting impact on the artistic traditions of Islam. The importance ascribed to religious manuscripts generated a similar esteem and demand for texts devoted to science, history or literature. The production of the book developed into a complex art form requiring the expertise of specialists, including those who made papers, inks, pigments, pens and other writing implements; bookbinders who worked with leather and produced tooled and gold-stamped covers for the manuscripts; scribes who specialized in diverse scripts and styles; illuminators who designed and executed frontispieces, finispieces, chapter headings, and marginal decorations; and painters who made illustrations to accompany the verses and texts (37-44).

The establishment of libraries and the support of ateliers supplying these institutions with manuscripts became essential attributes of princely life and a pre-requisite for great rulers. Manuscripts were either chosen from existing literature or commissioned from scientists, historians and poets who were gathered at the courts (55).

The division of labor among the men who worked on the earliest books and the structure of studios are yet to be determined, but it is clear that all rulers, whether great or petty, aspired to be patrons of art and supported the production of costly manuscripts. Books were cherished works of art and their creators were highly respected, a testimony to the intellectualism that existed in early Islamic societies.

The act of devotion implicit in copying the Holy Book is evident in the earliest manuscripts of the Qur'an which date to the 8th or 9th centuries. Even the uninitiated and the illiterate are impressed by the rhythm and flow of carefully-wrought calligraphy. Although both Kufic, the angular script, and Naskhi, the cursive type, were known to exist in pre-Islamic times, early Muslim calligraphers chose the former, transforming it into a majestic style (1–6). Kufic continued to be employed in manuscripts throughout the history of Islam, even though in time variations of the cursive script, such as Nastaliq or Thuluth, became more popular. These latter would be used to transcribe the body of the text, but Kufic, the first Islamic script used to copy the Qur'an, would always retain its prestige and be chosen to inscribe the titles and chapter headings.

The cursive script developed into a number of groups and sub-groups after the 13th century, and many calligraphers became expert in several different styles. Six distinct types of cursive script were defined by Yaqut al-Mustasimi (died 1299), who was employed by the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad and produced legendary works that are still revered by devotees of Islamic calligraphy (16, 17). His canons were revised by another luminary, Shaikh Hamdullah (1426–1520), tutor to the Ottoman sultan Bayzid II (22). Among the celebrated innovators were Mir Ali of Tabriz, who is credited with the creation of Nastaliq around the turn of the 15th century; Ahmad Karahisari (1468–1556), the artist of the Ottoman court whose unique Kufic and

Thuluth scripts have yet to be matched (24); Mir Ali of Herat, a 16th-century artist who excelled in single sheets of Nastaliq verses, and was so prolific that today there is hardly an imperial album without a sample of his exquisite work; and the Turkish great master Hafiz Osman (1642–98), whose Qur'ans became the first to be printed in facsimile in the 19th century and widely circulated (26).

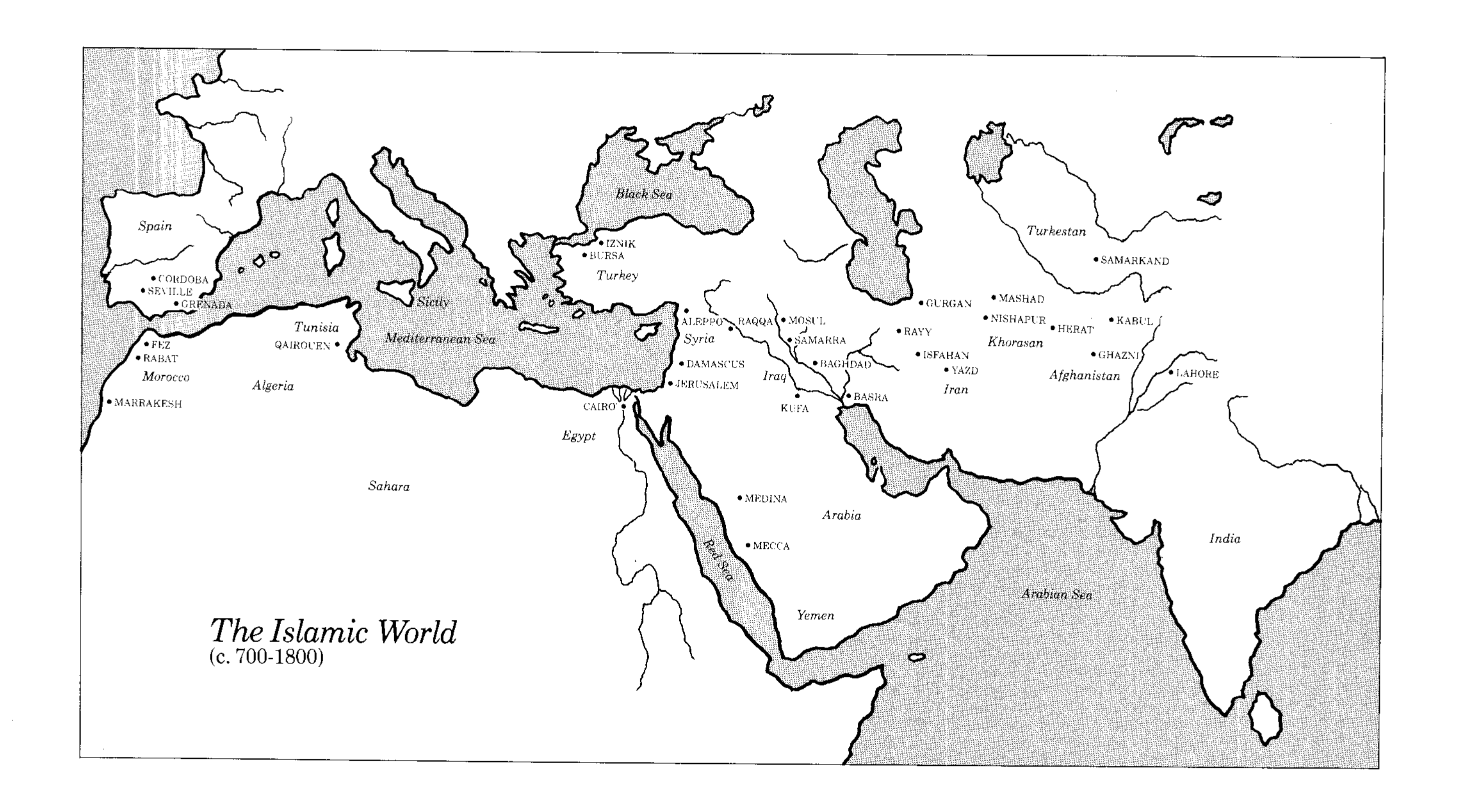
The art of calligraphy flourished throughout the history of Islam and was particularly cherished in the 18th and 19th centuries. Calligraphy, as a unique artistic expression of the Islamic faith, continues to have a special relevance to Muslim society.

Patrons, whether rich or poor, imperial or humble, commissioned or purchased individual volumes or single sheets transcribed by the artists they admired. The persistent interest in the tradition and in the aesthetics of calligraphy stimulated this art form to be always vibrant and innovative, kept it alive, and helped it to maintain its impeccable standards. Patrons demanded excellence and high quality, and the calligraphers met the challenge admirably.

In addition to its use in manuscripts, calligraphy was also an integral component of the other arts and was used both as a decorative feature and as a means for transmitting messages. The decorative repertoire of metalwork, ceramics, textiles and glass, dating from the formative years of Islam, clearly indicates the impact of the art of writing. The earliest datable examples of metalwork are embellished with inscriptions that include a series of good wishes or pious statements (83, 89). The same sentiments are found in contemporary ceramics, particularly in those produced during the 9th and 10th centuries in north-eastern Iran and Iraq (107, 109, 114). The Arabic phrases bestow "health," "wealth," "power" or "blessings to the owner," advise them to have "trust in God" or contain a number of profound proverbs or aphorisms. Their contents are extremely illuminating, reflecting the desire of the patrons for objects in daily use decorated with sentiments representative of the ethics and morality of the society (85, 88, 93).

Inscriptions in a variety of forms became the most distinctive feature in the artistic vocabulary of objects produced between the 12th and 14th centuries. The information provided by inscriptions can be extremely useful in reconstructing the types of patronage, as well as in identifying the names of the owners and the artists and establishing the chronological sequence of artistic expression.

The second consistent feature that characterizes Islamic art is the tendency to invest an object with universally accepted themes and symbols, thus enhancing its intrinsic value. In addition to the written messages discussed above, the makers employed a



wide range of artistic elements or motifs which were immediately recognized and understood by patrons.

During the formative years of Islamic art, artists relied upon existing traditions and supplied patrons with objects decorated with familiar themes. These were based on the Roman, Byzantine and Coptic arts of the eastern Mediterranean, the Sasanian traditions of Iraq and Iran and, to some extent, those of Central Asia, India and China. Soon these traditions were synthesized and incorporated with newly-developed Islamic motifs, enabling the artists to formulate an extensive decorative vocabulary.

The harmony of the universe and its perpetual life and movement are represented by delicately entwined floral scrolls bearing naturalistic and fantastic blossoms. These scrolls extend beyond the physical boundaries of the units and are frequently superimposed, creating a feeling of endless space and depth.

This theme appears in manuscript illuminations, architectural decoration and almost all the arts of Islam. Some objects are decorated with a profusion of flowers and blossoming trees that capture the concept of perfect and perpetual spring, as seen on a number of 16th-century Turkish ceramics (129–131); others represent only a single element, frequently a composite lotus bud, which is an abstracted version of the same theme.

Royal themes are far more explicit and portray the prince participating in such activities as banquets, hunts, polo games and battles (90). The princely cycle was particularly favored on objects produced between the 12th and 14th centuries. The models for the vignettes or selected episodes represented on metalwork, ceramics, glass, ivories and other arts were probably taken from manuscript illustrations where the painters portrayed historical or literary kings performing these feats and activities. When removed from textual reference and transmitted onto an object, such as a lusterware bowl or brass basin, these episodes become symbols of good things on earth and life hereafter. The patrons were obviously pleased to own works of art with pleasant and auspicious messages, and sought to surround themselves with objects whose meanings could be searched, analyzed, discussed and shared. They also understood that such single elements as a lion or eagle attacking prey depicted not only kings overpowering their enemies but also symbolized victory of good against evil and the triumph of faith (157).

Islamic societies were deeply interested in astronomy (64–70), as attested by the large number of instruments and texts devoted to this subject. The heavenly bodies were believed to be an integral part of man's universe. It is, therefore, not surprising to find depictions of the planets and constellations (87). The crescent and star, which are today represented on the flags of several Islamic nations, point to the persistence of this tradition.

The third unifying feature, the preoccupation with harmonious and refined design, is also one that immediately identifies a work of art as Islamic. Whether the object is a frontispiece, a ceramic plate or a silver-inlaid brass vessel, and whether it was produced during the formative years of Islamic art or under the influence of European traditions in the 19th century, the physical layout bears the stamp of Islamic aesthetics of design. The surfaces are divided into symmetrical units or into zones of predetermined proportions, which are then filled with primary and secondary themes; certain elements are repeated or accented, creating a refined and balanced composition. The formal design of a 10th-century illumination is not that different from one made for a 20th-century manuscript. Decorative elements and proportions of the divisions may vary, but both adhere to the same criteria of aesthetics.

Even when the symmetry of design is abolished, the attempt to harmonize and balance the elements is clearly visible. At times, equilibrium is attained through a "negative" and "positive" version of the same theme. This is the case in several 16th-century Turkish ceramic plates where a floral scroll is rendered in cobalt-blue on white on the interior, while on the exterior the ground is painted blue and the same scroll is reserved in white, the color of the body or paste of the plate. Duality of design, emphasizing both the foreground and background, is frequently employed; the primary and secondary themes attain equal importance and advance or recede depending on the view of the beholder. The artist achieves this vibrating surface interest with formal elements of design as well as with coloristic effects. For instance, a floral scroll with naturalistic blossoms superimposed on one with stylized split-leaves may at the first glance appear above the latter, but upon close inspection the viewer discovers that some of the split-leaves lie on top of the blossoms, creating an ambiguity in spatial relationships. On other objects, the background is painted in a brilliant pigment, forcing it to advance and

overshadow what logically should have been the main theme. Parts of a painting may flow over the carefully-drawn frame and jut into the margins; certain elements may even be bold enough to transgress the text and sprout between the verses. Physical boundaries are often disregarded, and only a microcosm of the entire design appears to have been captured within the framework of the object (77). This feature is particularly noticeable in rugs where the borders on the four sides cut through the composition and enclose only a segment (157). One realizes that the design continues infinitely in two or even three dimensions, and what is depicted here is only a part or a mere symbol of the whole.

The extension of the design beyond the physical boundaries of the object suggests that we are dealing with the same concept found in radiating designs; that is, the visual representation of the harmony and order of the universe, its intricate and infinite existence. What the beholder observes is a portion with which he is identified and of which he is a part.

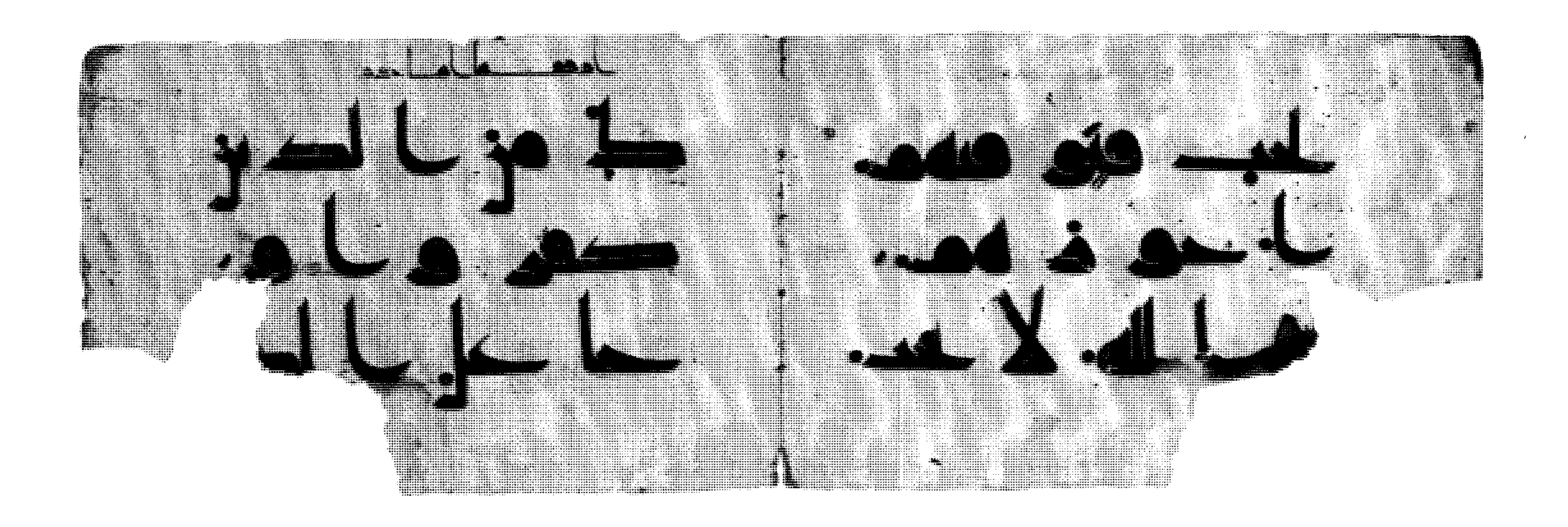
The arts of Islam reflect the moral standards of Muslim society and its profound involvement with divine representation of the physical world. The primary concern of the artist was to produce an object invested with intrinsic messages which could be interpreted on several levels. The simplest level was the appreciation of the technical and aesthetic qualities of the pieces. They were beautifully designed and executed and contained recognizable themes that were meaningful to patrons. Some themes and symbols bestowed blessings and good wishes with protective talismans. These very elements also allowed themselves to be interpreted in a more sophisticated manner among scholarly societies; they represented the omnipotence of the universe, its order, harmony and beauty.

The unity of Islamic art, then, is displayed in its use of calligraphy, symbolism and harmonious design, all visual images of the Faith, rendered on objects in daily use.

ESIN ATIL
The Center for Asian Art, The Smithsonian Institution

Calligraphy and Illumination





◄ 1 Double Qur'an Page
Bearing the Waqf notation of al-Majur

Syria, 9th century
Ink, color on parchment
Page size: 12.3 cm × 19 cm

Text: Sura III, v.49–50

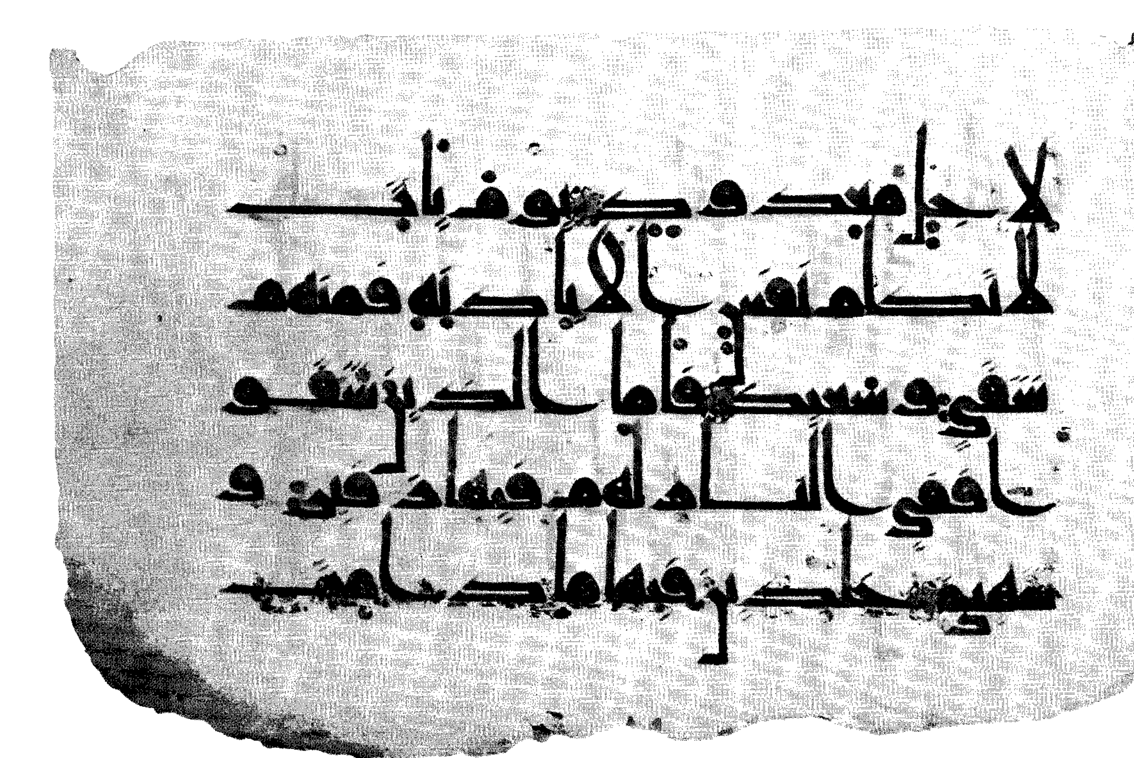
The two pages illustrated here have three lines in brown Kufic script, with vocalization marks in red. They are of particular interest for the study of early Qur'an manuscripts because of a Waqf (endowment) inscription along the top margin. The donor, al-Majur, was governor of Damascus under the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutamid between 869 and 877. This implies that the Qur'an was copied in the later 9th century, and very possibly in Damascus. Its calligraphy may be compared with that of another early Qur'an which contains a Waqf notation by Abd al-Munim bin Ahmad dated 289 (911) in Damascus (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 1421).

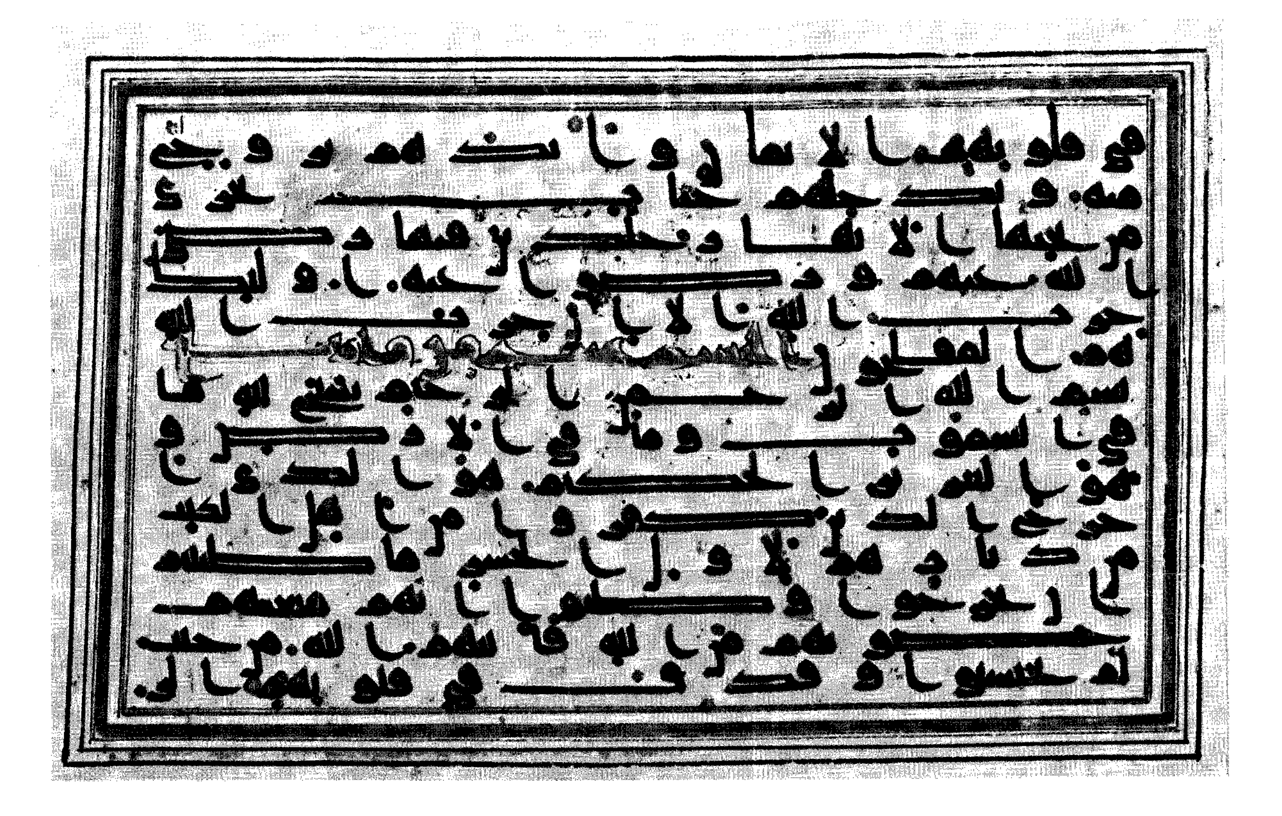
◄ 2 Qur'an Page

Iraq or North Africa, 9th century
Ink, color on parchment
Page size: 22.5 cm × 32.5 cm

Text: Sura XXVIII, mid-v.58–mid-v.59

This page is inscribed with five lines of dark brown Kufic calligraphy. The vocalization is indicated with red, yellow, blue and green dots, while some consonants are distinguished with fine brown strokes. The calligrapher has achieved a monumental effect of considerable beauty.





◄ 3 Qur'an Page

Iraq or North Africa, 9th century
Ink, color, gold on parchment
Page size: 12.7 cm × 20 cm

Text: Sura XI, mid-v.104–108

This page contains five lines of brown Kufic script, with gold florets punctuating the verses. Like the preceding example, orthographic marks are rendered with colored dots and fine brown dashes. The calligrapher of this page, however, has compressed the text and minimized the extension of individual letters. As a result, the page has a very different aesthetic effect from no.2.

◄ 4 Fragment of a Qur'an

Iran, 9th century
Ink, color, gold on parchment
Page size: 12.2 cm × 18.7 cm

Text: Sura LVI, v.6–LIX, v.16

There are 12 folios written in neat brown Kufic, 14 lines to the page, with vocalization in red and green. Three Sura headings are written in gold.

The section is of great historical interest because the last folio bears inscriptions and seals showing that this Qur'an was seen by a number of rulers and important statesmen.

Folio 12 a.

i. A seal with the inscription "The Sovereignty is for God, 762" (1360–61).

ii. Autograph inscription of Shah Ismail (1501–24) first ruler of the Safavid dynasty. "Ismail al-Musavi al-Husayni al-Safavi Bahadur Khan had the honor of seeing this noble holy Qur'an in 917" (1511–12).

Folio 12 b.

i. Autograph inscription of Shah Tahmasp, second ruler of the Safavid dynasty (1524–76). "Seen through the intermediary of Abd al-Hakim in Rajab 971 according to the will of his Highness" (Feb. 1564).

ii. Autograph inscription of Shah Abbas I, fifth ruler of the Safavid dynasty (1588–1629). "It was seen through the intermediary of Allah Verdi Khan in the house of . . . according to the will of his Highness." (Allah Verdi Khan was Shah Abbas' minister.)

iii. Autograph inscription of Shah Sulaiman I, eighth ruler of the Safavid dynasty (1666–94). "Sulaiman al-Safavi al-Husayni al-Musavi Bahadur Khan had the honor of seeing this noble holy Qur'an."

iv. Five seals, including one with the inscription "Khanehzade Shah Jahan, 1037" (1628).

The last line of the manuscript states that it was written by Hasan ibn Ali. Although scholars would question this attribution to the grandson of the Prophet, it has clearly been accepted for centuries and the manuscript treated as a priceless relic.

◄ 5 Double Qur'an Page

North Africa, 9th century
Gold, silver on blue parchment
Page size: 31 cm × 41 cm

Text: Sura XLII, mid-10–23

Each page has 15 lines of gold Kufic script, with silver (oxydized) rosettes marking the verse-ends. Silver medallions in the border indicate the divisions of 20 verses.

These magnificent pages come from a Qur'an which is thought to have been ordered by the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (813–17) as a gift to the great mosque at Mashhad. Most of the manuscript is today in the National Library in Tunis, although several detached folios came into the possession of the distinguished scholar and collector F. R. Martin in the early part of this century. These are now scattered in various museums and private collections. This is an exceptional example since it is a well-preserved double page with a continuous text.

6 Double Qur'an Page

North Africa, 10th century
Ink, color on parchment
Page size: 28.2 cm × 39.4 cm

Text: Sura XXXIII, v.25–mid-v.35

Each page has 15 lines of clear, precise Kufic calligraphy written in dark brown, with red, green and brown diacritical marks. A very similar style of script can be found in a manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Ms.1401) which has 13 lines to the page (see M. Lings, *The Quranic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination*, London, 1976, p.6).

7 Illuminated Frontispiece from a Qur'an

North Africa, 10th century
Color and gold on parchment
Page size: 11.7 cm × 20.9 cm

Qairouan was one of the most important centers for the production of Qur'ans during the early Islamic period. This horizontal format is typical, as is the geometric 'carpet' design (see M. Jenkins, *Islamic Art in the Kuwait National Museum: The al-Sabah Collection*, London, 1983, cover illustration). This page is illuminated in gold, brown and blue in a design framed and articulated by a knotting band of bare parchment left in reserve. On the other side of this page, a gold vine-pattern border encloses a diagonal trellis field with a trefoil plant in reserve within each lozenge, and a large palmette in the border.

لبستين وعن بيعتين وعن الملامسة وعن المنابذة وعن أن يحتبي الرجل في ثوب واحد ليس على فرجه منه شيء وعن أن يشتمل الرجل بالثوب الواحد على أحد شقيه

وحدثني مالك عن نافع عن عبد الله بن عمر أن عمر بن الخطاب رأى حلة سيراء تباع عند باب المسجد فقال يا رسول الله لو اشتريت هذه الحلة فلبستها يوم الجمعة وللوفد إذا قدموا عليك فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إنما يلبس هذه من لا خلاق له في الآخرة ثم جاء رسول الله منها حلل فأعطى عمر بن الخطاب منها حلة فقال عمر يا رسول الله أكسوتنيها وقد قلت في حلة عطارد ما قلت فقال رسول الله عليه السلام لم أكسكها لتلبسها فكساها عمر أخا له مشركا بمكة

وحدثني مالك عن إسحاق بن عبد الله بن أبي طلحة أنه قال قال أنس بن مالك رأيت عمر بن الخطاب وهو يومئذ أمير المؤمنين وقد رقع بين كتفيه برقاع ثلاث لبد بعضها فوق بعض

في صفة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم

وحدثني يحيى عن مالك عن ربيعة بن أبي عبد الرحمن

8 Qur'an Page

Iran, 9th–10th century
Ink, color on parchment
Page size: 20.3 cm × 13.2 cm

Text: Sura II, v.185–87

This page has six lines of brown Kufic, with orthographic marks in red and brown. It is tentatively attributed to Iran because of its somewhat attenuated strokes, and the triangular form of certain letter heads. These features may also be seen in a group of scripts collectively called Eastern Kufic, and generally attributed to the Iranian part of the Islamic world. Many of these other examples are vertically-oriented paper pages with secure dates ranging from the mid-10th century to the 13th century. This sample, however, is executed on parchment and retains the horizontal format associated with an earlier period.

9 Qur'an Page

Iraq or Iran, 9th–10th century
Ink, color, gold on parchment
Page size: 15.1 cm × 21 cm

Text: Sura IX, v.26–33

This page has eight lines of script, with gold discs marking the ends of verses. A larger red and gold disc shows the division of 10 verses, and orthographic marks are in red, green and brown. The slightly irregular rhythm and the variable shape of individual letters suggest that the script has not reached stylistic maturity.

◄ 10 Kitab al-Muwatta

Copied by Ubaydullah bin Said al-Warraq

Spain, Rajab 391 AH/June 1001 AD
Ink on parchment
Page size: 27.2 cm × 22 cm

The manuscript has 78 folios, with 17 lines of neat brown Maghribi script to the page. The headings are emphasized in larger script, and there are considerable marginal notes throughout. The inscription of an owner, Abu Muhammad Abdullah bin Abdul Azizi, is dated 480 (1087–88).

The text is a juridical work consulted by the followers of the great jurist Malik bin Anas (708–95). It was originally compiled by Yahya bin Yahya Katir al-Masmudi (d.848). Since this legal school was most influential in the Maghrib, it is not surprising that the earliest known manuscripts of the *Kitab al-Muwatta* come from there. The oldest known copy, dated 277 (890), is in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, and is also written in fine Maghribi script. This manuscript appears to be the second oldest dated copy. Another manuscript, undated but attributed to the 11th century, is in the General Library, Rabat (Ms.840).



وأما السائل فلا تنهر

وأما بنعمة ربك فحدث

[illegible]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ألم نشرح لك صدرك

ووضعنا عنك وزرك

الذي أنقض ظهرك

◄ 11 Fragment of a Qur'an

Spain, 12th century
Ink, color, gold on vellum
Page size: 27.5 cm × 27 cm

Text: Sura LXXXII, v.16–XCIX, v.8

This rare fragmentary manuscript has 30 folios, each with seven lines of Maghribi script. The diacritical marks are rendered in yellow, green, blue, red and turquoise. The Sura headings, of which there are 17 (folios 1a, 5a, 7b, 10a, 11a, 13a, 15a, 18a, 20a, 21b, 23a, 24a, 25b, 27a, 28a, 30a), are written in a gold Kufic script that contrasts powerfully with the flowing Maghribi script, and they are further embellished by exquisitely illuminated medallions which project into the border. Gold knots indicate the end of each verse; crested discs show the fifth verses; and scalloped medallions mark the tenth.

This beautiful free-flowing calligraphy was fully developed in Spain and the Maghrib by the late 11th century and was the only cursive style to evolve directly from Kufic. According to Ibn Khaldun, students of calligraphy in this area learned by writing entire words, rather than repeating individual letters as calligraphers were taught to do in other parts of the Islamic world. The finest surviving example of this style is a Qur'an in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul, no.360 (see M. Lings, *The Quranic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination*, London, 1976, p.98).

ولو أننا نزلنا إليهم
الملئكة وكلمهم
الموتى وحشرنا عليهم

كل شيء قبلا ما
كانوا ليؤمنوا إلا
أن يشاء الله ولكن
أكثرهم يجهلون
وكذلك جعلنا

امنوا بالذي أرسلت به
وطائفة لم يؤمنوا
فاصبروا حتى يحكم
الله بيننا وهو خير
الحكمين

تم الجزء الثامن من المصحف
بحمد الله وعونه وتيسيره
وصلى الله على محمد
نبيه وسلم تسليما

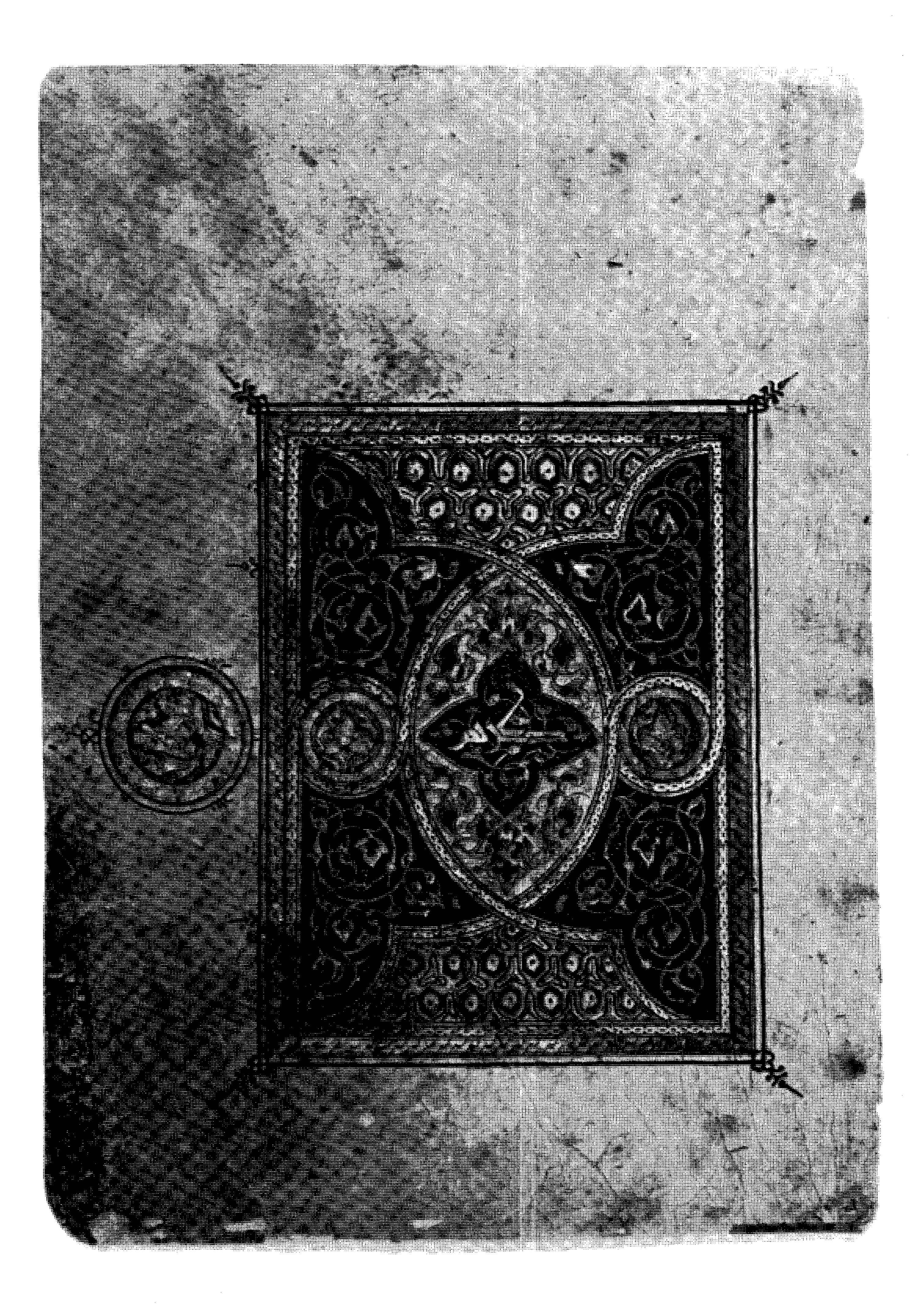
◄ 12 Qur'an Section

Morocco, 13th century
Ink, color, gold on parchment
Page size: 21.5 cm × 20 cm

Text: Juz VIII

The section has 74 folios and three end pages. Each page has five lines of dark brown Maghribi script, with orthographic marks in red, yellow, blue and green. A gold medallion containing a red circle with Kufic marks the divisions of ten verses; a crested palmette marks the divisions of five verses; and three gold discs show the end of each verse. A gold illuminated panel heads the text (folio 1b); there is one gold Sura heading in monumental Kufic (folio 34a); and on the last page the calligraphy is written in gold, within an illuminated frame, with a marginal medallion.

The common culture shared by Spain and Morocco is well illustrated by comparing this with the fragment on the previous page. This manuscript lacks the grandeur of the earlier Spanish example, but it is impressive nevertheless, and rendered all the more striking by its remarkable state of preservation. In contrast with the many different styles of writing developed in the East, Maghribi calligraphy continued to be the standard script up until this century in Morocco. Parchment also remained in use in Morocco long after it was abandoned in favor of paper elsewhere.



13 Al-Bisharat w'al-Wuquf (The Book of Prophecy and Knowledge)

Copied by Muhammad bin Omar bin Abu Bakr

Iran, 5 Jamadi I 646 AH/26 August 1248 AD
Ink and gold on paper
Page size: 19.8 cm × 14.2 cm

The Arabic manuscript has 117 folios and 17 lines in two columns to the page. It is written in neat black Naskhi with significant words picked out in red. The first page has a finely illuminated ex-libris, with an inscription saying that the manuscript was written for the library of the "Exalted Imam Ahmad bin al-Sadr al-Rafi, the Crown of Islam." The two opening pages of text have illuminated headpieces giving the title of the book and the name of the author. The headings in the text are written in bold Eastern Kufic script.

This appears to be the only recorded copy of this text, which concerns the circumstances surrounding the Revelation of the Suras of the Qur'an. The author, Ibn Taifur bin Mansur, is otherwise unknown as are the calligrapher and patron.

14 Two Illuminated Pages from a Qur'an

Egypt, circa 1300
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 19.5 cm × 13.9 cm

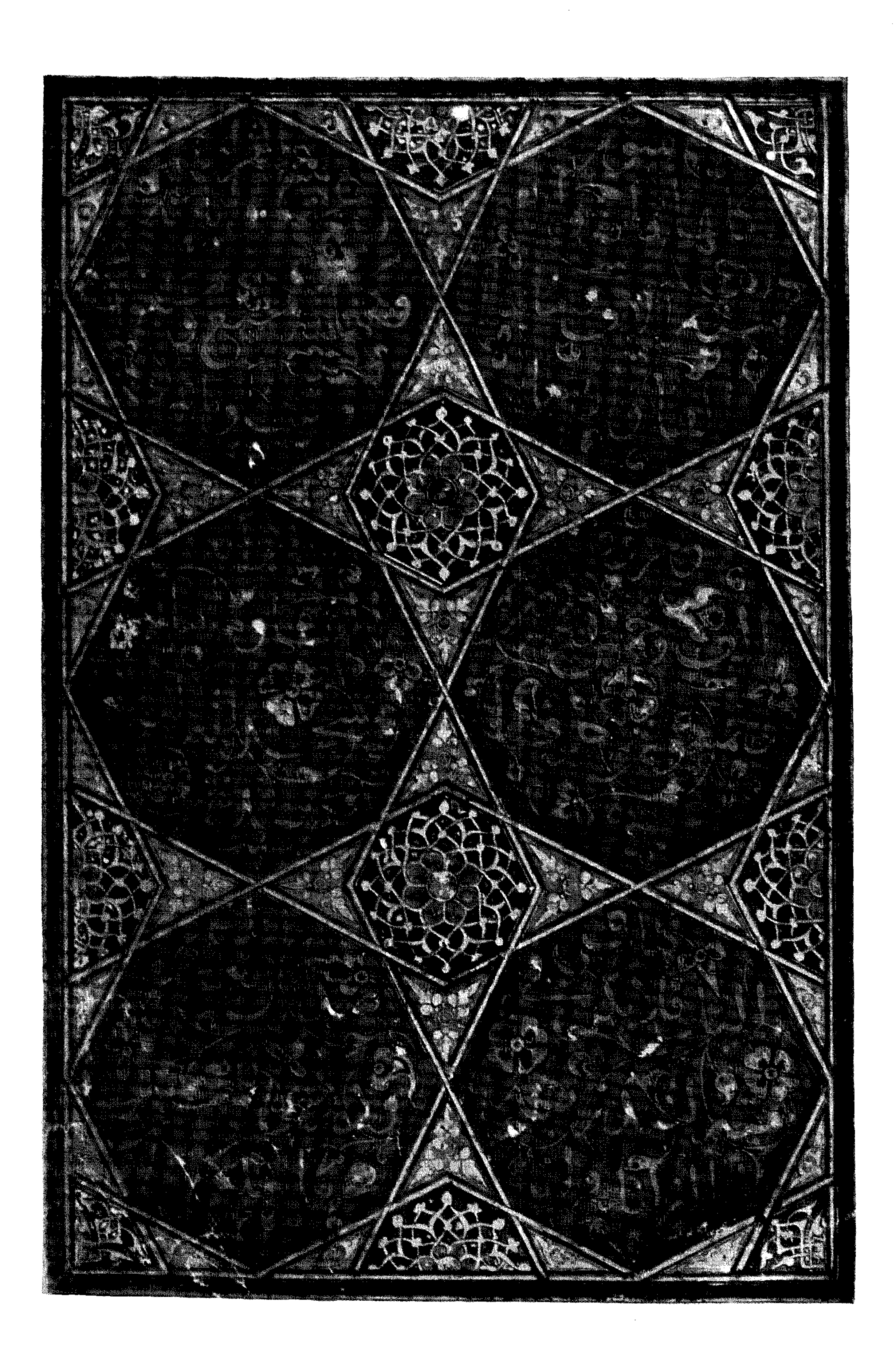
◄ a. The page is illuminated with a rectangular panel outlined in gold cable pattern and enclosing a lobed geometric design. Above and below, the panels enclose a tile-pattern of small hexagons and 'Y' shapes in green, white, red and blue on a gold background. The side panels contain floral arabesques on a blue background, each side of a roundel enclosing a palmette in gold and red. The central lozenge encloses lotus flowers on a white ground around a central black window with a white Kufic inscription and gold spiralling vines. A circular medallion protrudes into the border.

b. Sura XVII, v.101–mid-v.102
Three lines of black calligraphy are outlined in gold clouds within a rectangular frame of gold cable pattern. Above and below are blue rectangles enclosing white Kufic calligraphy against floral arabesques in gold and colors. Two circular medallions protrude into the border.

These two pages belonged originally to a small Qur'anic manuscript. Their style of decoration follows closely the patterns of such manuscripts in Egypt in the late 13th and the early 14th century (see A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Illuminated*, Dublin, 1967, pls. 35 ff., especially pl. 37 for a very close parallel).

Provenance: H. P. Kraus Collection

Published: E. J. Grube, *Islamic Paintings from the 11th to the 18th Century in the Collection of Hans P. Kraus*, New York, n.d., nos. 15–16.



◄ 15 Qur'an

Copied and illuminated by Abdul Aziz bin Abu'l-Ghanam bin Abu'l Fazail al-Kashi

Iran, 703 AH/1304 AD
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 30.2 cm × 19.5 cm

This Qur'an has 272 folios with 13 lines of beautiful script in two different styles, within gold, blue and green margins. Gold rosettes mark the verse-ends, and illuminated medallions and palmettes in the borders indicate the divisions of five and ten verses.

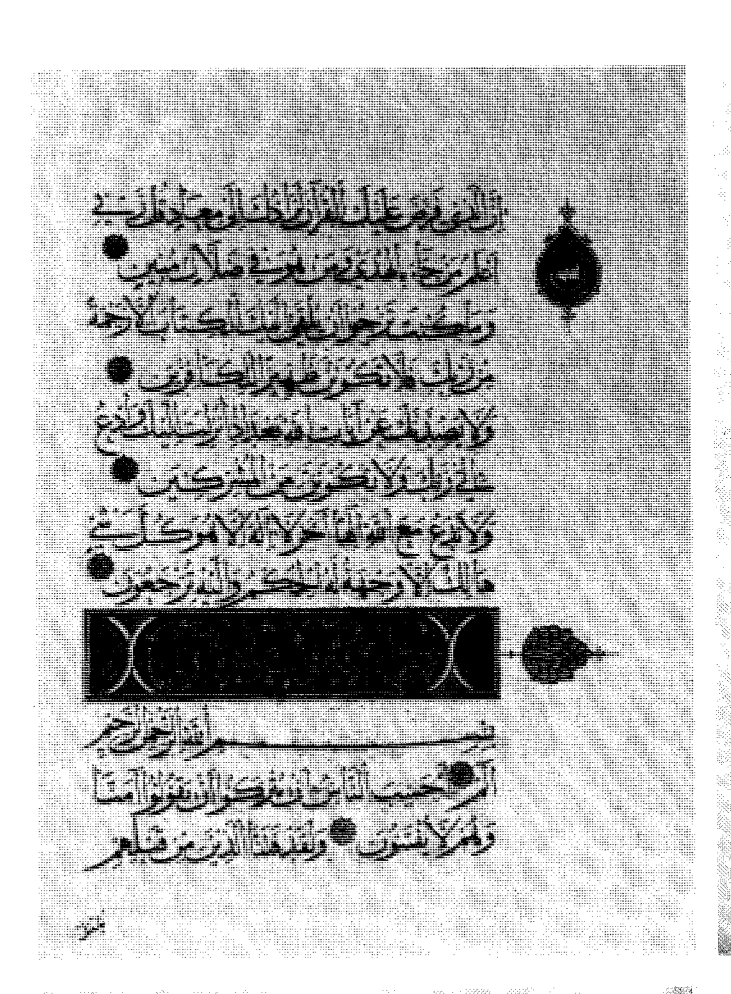
The first double page has a magnificent illuminated geometrical frontispiece. Each folio has six silver (now oxydized) octagons with a delicate flowing wave-pattern. This pattern forms the background for gold calligraphy that is interlaced with a different flowering vine in every panel. Smaller blue octagons with a gold and red geometric flower link the silver octagons, and the smaller triangular spaces are in reddish gold with a paler gold leaf-motif. All the Sura headings are written in gold within an illuminated rectangular panel with a palmette projecting into the border. The colophon, identifying the scribe and providing the date, is written entirely in gold. On the final folio, an inscription dated 701 (1660) indicates that the manuscript was given to Mir Sultan Mahmud, "the eldest son." This notation may have been made at the same time as the floral borders were added; they are distinctly Mughal in style.

The year 1304 saw the death of Ghazan Khan, who had re-established Islam as the state religion in Iran, and the accession of Uljaitu, under whom the arts and sciences revived, after the terrible devastations wrought by the Mongols. His remarkable Vizir, Rashid al-Din, established the Scriptorium in Tabriz, which produced *The History of the World*, the first great masterpiece of the Ilkhan period. Qur'ans produced under Mongol rule are rare, probably because of the after-effects of the terrible upheavals of the 13th century, and also because of the destructiveness of the Timurid invasion in the second half of the 14th century. A Qur'an copied in the same year by Ahmad bin al-Shaikh al-Suhrawardi is in the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, Ms. 3548.

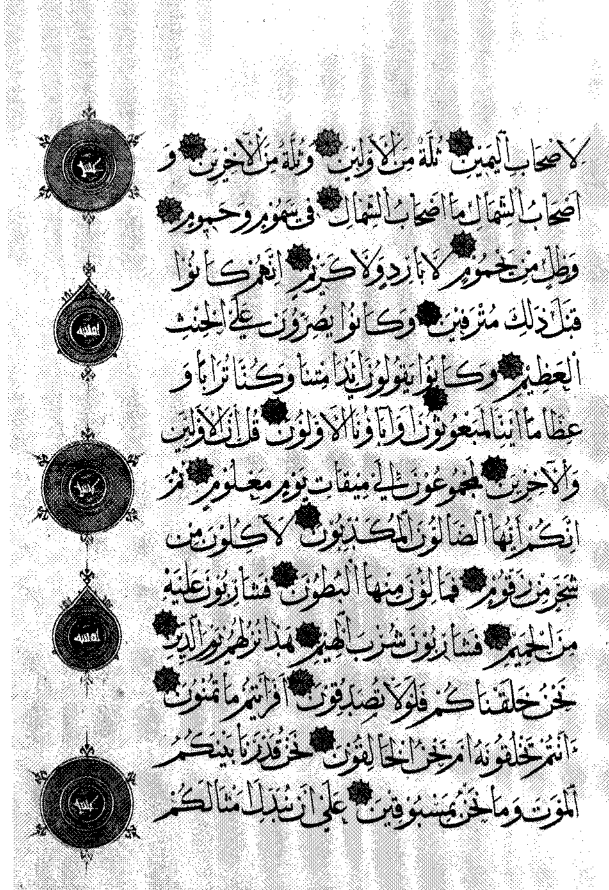
أجر العاملين ۝ وترى الملائكة حافين
من حول العرش يسبحون بحمد ربهم وقضي
بينهم بالحق وقيل الحمد لله رب العالمين ۝



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
حم ۝ تنزيل الكتاب من الله العزيز العليم ۝
غافر الذنب وقابل التوب شديد العقاب ذي
الطول لا إله إلا هو إليه المصير ۝ ما يجادل في
آيات الله إلا الذين كفروا فلا يغررك تقلبهم في
البلاد ۝ كذبت قبلهم قوم نوح والأحزاب
من بعدهم وهمت كل أمة برسولهم ليأخذوه
وجادلوا بالباطل ليدحضوا به الحق فأخذتهم


إن الذي فرض عليك القرآن لرادك إلى معاد قل ربي
أعلم من جاء بالهدى ومن هو في ضلال مبين ۝
وما كنت ترجو أن يلقى إليك الكتاب إلا رحمة
من ربك فلا تكونن ظهيرا للكافرين ۝
ولا يصدنك عن آيات الله بعد إذ أنزلت إليك وادع
إلى ربك ولا تكونن من المشركين ۝
ولا تدع مع الله إلها آخر لا إله إلا هو كل شيء
هالك إلا وجهه له الحكم وإليه ترجعون ۝
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الم ۝ أحسب الناس أن يتركوا أن يقولوا آمنا
وهم لا يفتنون ۝ ولقد فتنا الذين من قبلهم


والسابقون السابقون ۝ أولئك المقربون ۝ في جنات
النعيم ۝ ثلة من الأولين ۝ وقليل من الآخرين ۝
على سرر موضونة ۝ متكئين عليها متقابلين ۝
يطوف عليهم ولدان مخلدون ۝ بأكواب وأباريق
وكأس من معين ۝ لا يصدعون عنها ولا ينزفون ۝
وفاكهة مما يتخيرون ۝ ولحم طير مما يشتهون ۝
وحور عين ۝ كأمثال اللؤلؤ المكنون ۝ جزاء
بما كانوا يعملون ۝ لا يسمعون فيها لغوا ولا تأثيما ۝
إلا قيلا سلاما سلاما ۝ وأصحاب اليمين ما أصحاب
اليمين ۝ في سدر مخضود ۝ وطلح منضود ۝ وظل
ممدود ۝ وماء مسكوب ۝ وفاكهة كثيرة ۝
لا مقطوعة ولا ممنوعة ۝ وفرش مرفوعة ۝ إنا
أنشأناهن إنشاء ۝ فجعلناهن أبكارا ۝ عربا أترابا ۝


لأصحاب اليمين ۝ ثلة من الأولين ۝ وثلة من الآخرين ۝ و
أصحاب الشمال ما أصحاب الشمال ۝ في سموم وحميم ۝
وظل من يحموم ۝ لا بارد ولا كريم ۝ إنهم كانوا
قبل ذلك مترفين ۝ وكانوا يصرون على الحنث
العظيم ۝ وكانوا يقولون أئذا متنا وكنا ترابا و
عظاما أئنا لمبعوثون ۝ أوآباؤنا الأولون ۝ قل إن الأولين
والآخرين ۝ لمجموعون إلى ميقات يوم معلوم ۝ ثم
إنكم أيها الضالون المكذبون ۝ لآكلون من
شجر من زقوم ۝ فمالئون منها البطون ۝ فشاربون عليه
من الحميم ۝ فشاربون شرب الهيم ۝ هذا نزلهم يوم الدين
۝ نحن خلقناكم فلولا تصدقون ۝ أفرأيتم ما تمنون ۝
أأنتم تخلقونه أم نحن الخالقون ۝ نحن قدرنا بينكم
الموت وما نحن بمسبوقين ۝ على أن نبدل أمثالكم

16 Double Qur'an Page

Iraq, early 14th century
Ink, gold on paper
Page size: 43 cm × 27 cm

Text: Sura XXVIII, v.57–v.71

Only a few folios survive from what must have been a most remarkable manuscript. Magnificent gold Muhaqqaq script is outlined in black, seven lines to the page, with the 1st, 4th and 7th lines in larger script. The margins are ruled in gold and the verse-ends marked by gold rosettes. Although the colophon is missing, the calligraphy is similar to that of Pir Yahya Sufi, who was trained in the tradition of Yaqut al-Mustasimi (d.1299). It is eloquent evidence of the refinements introduced into the art of calligraphy from the 10th to the 13th centuries. During that period, three renowned masters – Ibn Muqla (d.940), Ibn al-Bawwab (d.1022) and Yaqut al-Mustasimi – established a new canon of proportion and regularized the various major scripts.

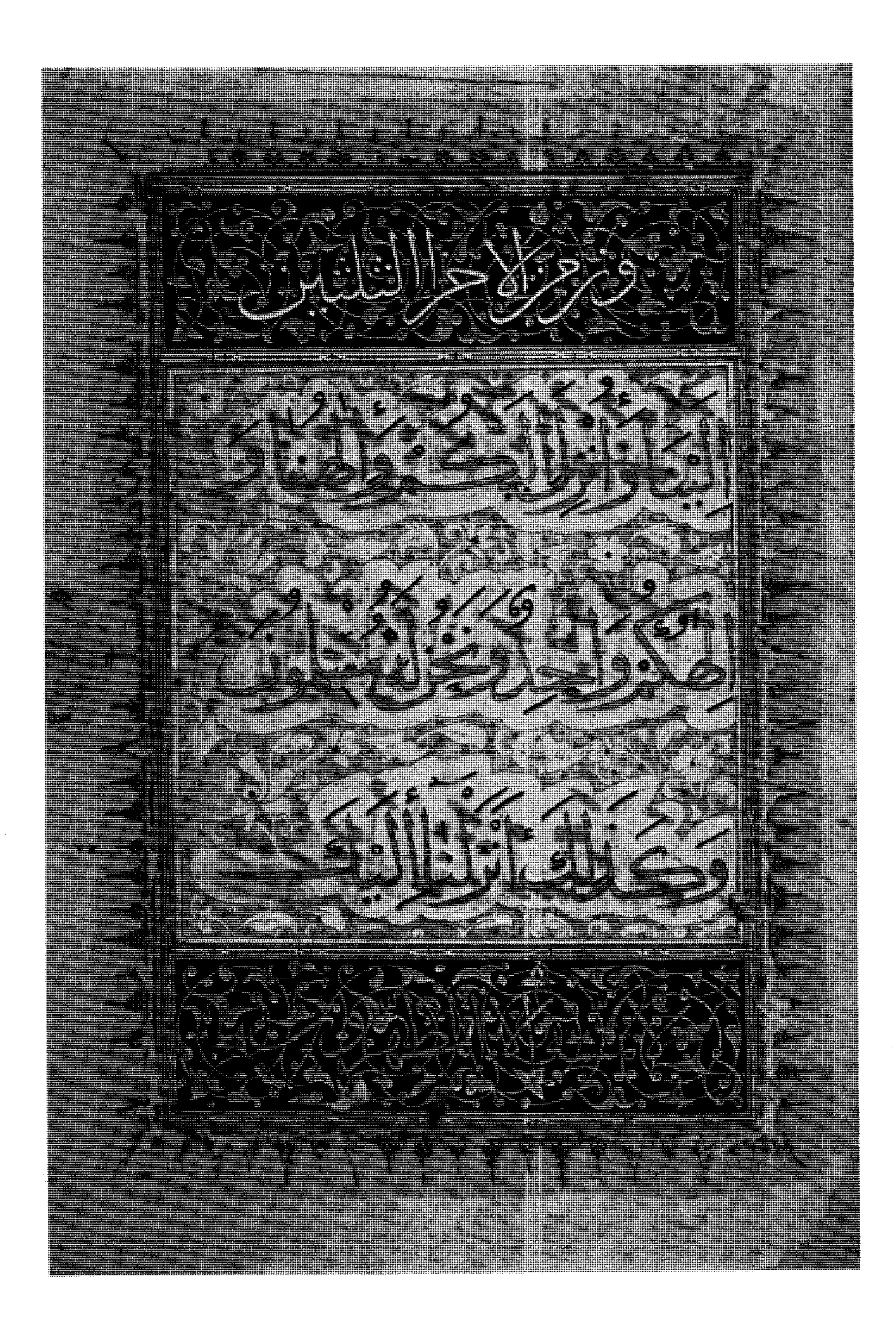
◄ 17 Fragment of a Qur'an

Copied by Arghun al-Kamili
Illuminated by Muhammad bin Sayf al-Din al-Naqqash

Iraq, early 14th century
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 37.5 cm × 27.5 cm

There are 28 folios with 13 lines of beautiful Rayhani calligraphy on polished paper. The verse-ends are marked by gold rosettes; the divisions of five verses by gold crested medallions with white Kufic on blue inside; and the divisions of 10 verses by similar gold discs. There are six Sura headings, each differently illuminated in colors and gold within a rectangular panel (headings of Suras LXXII, XLI, XXIX, LVI, LX, XL).

Arghun al-Kamili was one of the six principal pupils of Yaqut al-Mustasimi, and was considered to be the master of the Rayhani script. Nineteen folios of the same manuscript are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Ms. 1498), and the remainder are in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul.



18 Qur'an Page

Egypt, mid-14th century
Ink, color, on paper
Page size: 41 cm × 32 cm

Text: Sura IV, v.173–V, v.5

The text is written in black Thuluth script, with an illuminated Sura heading in gold, red and blue. This style of calligraphy was perfected and favored under the Mamluk dynasty in Egypt.

This is a page from a magnificent Qur'an of which the frontispiece and several illuminated pages are in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (see E. Atıl, *Art of the Arab World*, Washington, D.C., 1975, pls.41–42). Other pages are in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and in the al-Sabah Collection in the National Museum of Kuwait.

◄ 19 Qur'an Section

Copied by Amir Hajj bin Ahmad al-Saini

Egypt, Shawwal 734 AH/June 1334 AD
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 36 cm × 25 cm

Text: Juz XXVI

The manuscript has 46 leaves, with five lines to the page written on paper in elegant Rayhani script in gold. It has diacritical marks in blue, illuminated rosettes between verses and margins ruled in blue and gold. There is a fine double page of illumination in blue and gold, and folios 1b–2a have interlinear floral decoration in pink and blue. The original binding is of black morocco with stamped central medallions and cornerpieces.

A late 15th-century inscription on folio 1a states that the Qur'an was given in endowment to the Jamal al-Din Marjan Madrasa in Taiz, Yemen. Five other sections from this Qur'an (Juz VIII, XI, XVI, XX, XXVII) with the same inscription are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (see A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Illuminated*, Dublin, 1967, 69–73, Ms.1469 a–e).

20 Illuminated Frontispiece from a Qur'an

Egypt, circa 1400
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 21 cm × 15 cm

This frontispiece design derives its aesthetic integrity from precise, inter-locking half and quarter circles. The various zones demarcated by this gold framework are painted alternately in red and blue. The composition is further unified by an overlay of gold arabesques. Showing a pleasing harmony, it is nonetheless relatively simple compared to some 14th-century examples. On the reverse, there are four lines of Muhaqqaq calligraphy beneath a rectangular heading. This panel, enclosing lotus palmettes on a red background, is outlined in gold.

الجزء الرابع والعشرون

فمن أظلم ممن كذب على الله وكذب بالصدق
إذ جاءه أليس في جهنم مثوى للكافرين ۞
والذي جاء بالصدق وصدق به أولئك هم
المتقون ۞ لهم ما يشاؤون عند ربهم ذلك
جزاء المحسنين ۞ ليكفر الله عنهم أسوأ الذي

عملوا ويجزيهم أجرهم بأحسن الذي كانوا يعملون
أليس الله بكاف عبده ويخوفونك بالذين
من دونه ومن يضلل الله فما له من هاد ۞ ومن
يهد الله فما له من مضل أليس الله بعزيز ذي انتقام
ولئن سألتهم من خلق السموات والأرض ليقولن الله
قل أفرأيتم ما تدعون من دون الله إن أرادني الله بضر
هل هن كاشفات ضره أو أرادني برحمة هل

21 Colophon from a Hadith

Egypt, 14th century
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 27 cm × 18.5 cm

The gold calligraphy is floating in 'clouds' against a red lined ground with scrolling vines. The calligraphy in the heading is reserved on gold against a blue background. This style of decoration can be found on Mamluk manuscripts such as Qur'an sections in the British Library, London, Or.848 and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ms.1464.

◄ 22 Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad
Copied by Shaikh Hamdullah

Turkey, second half of 15th or early 16th century
Ink, gold and color on paper; mounted and backed in dark green silk and hinged with leather
Page size: 24 cm × 17 cm

This album page has 16 lines of calligraphy written in black ink interspersed with gold rosettes, dotted in blue and yellow. The signature is in the last line. The panel is set within an illuminated border of gold foliage, with the illuminator's mark in the upper left hand corner. The facing page is decorated with an all-over marbleized design in pale blue, orange, yellow and green.

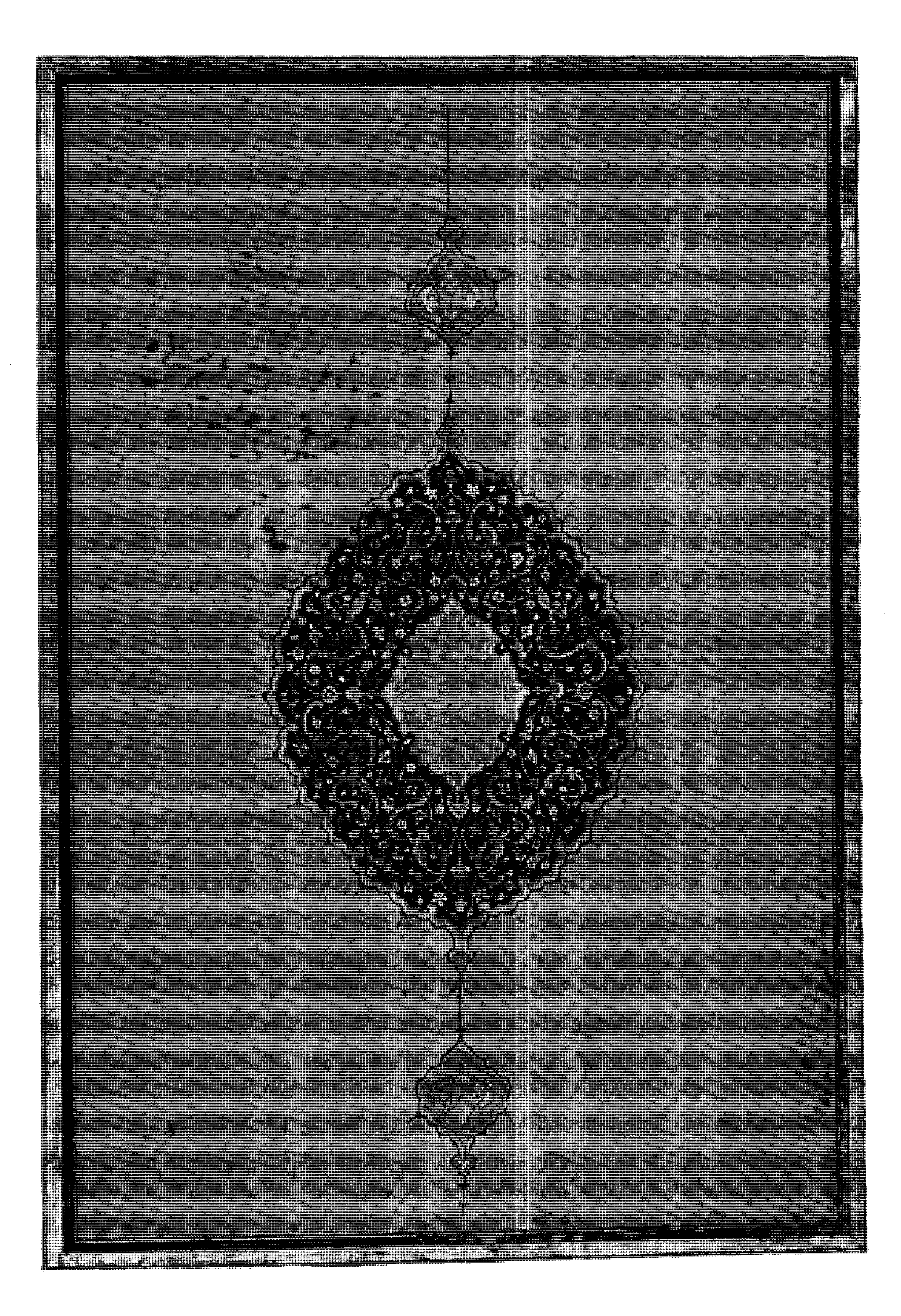
Shaikh Hamdullah (1436–1520) was one of the most renowned and influential of the Ottoman calligraphers. He studied under Hayreddin Marashi, and was summoned to Istanbul by Sultan Bayezid II, who had studied calligraphy under him when he was governor of Amasya. It is related that even when Sultan, Bayezid sat for long periods holding Shaikh Hamdullah's inkstand as he wrote. Shaikh Hamdullah followed the model of Yaqut al-Mustasimi, but developed his own style which remained the determining influence on Turkish calligraphers until the late 17th century. He trained many remarkable students, such as Muhiyuddin Amasi and Abdullah.

◄ 23 Two Qur'an Sections

Turkey, second quarter 16th century
Ink, color, gold on polished paper
Page size: 24 cm × 17.3 cm

Text: a. Juz III
b. Juz XXIV

These are two of the 20 surviving sections of a 30-part Qur'an. Each consists of 25 folios with seven lines of black Naskhi script per page. The writing follows closely the stylistic tradition of Shaikh Hamdullah. Gold discs indicate the ends of individual verses, and gold and blue circles in the margins mark every ten verses. Such Qur'ans were usually commissioned by patrons for new buildings, and were intended for public use in a mosque or madrasa. An inscription of folio 1a. of each section indicates that this Qur'an was commissioned in the memory of a certain Fatima, by her brother Osman Pasha (d.1571), a dignitary of the court of Süleyman the Magnificent. It was destined for use in the mosque of Mehmed Pasha in the city of Amid.



24 Prayer on the Sword of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib

Turkey, mid-16th century
Ink, gold on paper; tooled and gilt leather binding
Page size: 25.3 cm × 17.3 cm

This manuscript is the text of the prayer traditionally associated with the famous weapon of Ali. The manuscript has seven folios of thick polished buff paper and four end folios. The text is written in Tahrir (outlined) style, four lines to the page, floated in 'clouds' reserved on a gold background, and decorated with flowers in another tone of gold. The loops of the letters are filled in red and blue. The margins are ruled in green, blue and gold.

◄ Folio 1a. The plain buff text area contains an oval blue medallion with gold pendants. The illumination is of outstanding quality, composed of gold cloud bands interwoven with delicate curling vines bearing flowers of pink, turquoise, yellow, green, white and orange. The gold outline is pricked. In the center, a medallion bears the title of the manuscript written in gold on gold. The border of the page is scattered with small gold flowers.

Folio 1b. The text is surmounted by an illuminated headpiece of remarkable delicacy, in colors and three tones of gold. The border is decorated with lotus flowers in golds, pink and green on swaying stems, matched on the facing page.

The borders of the following double pages alternate between lotus pattern and flecks of gold. On the final folio, the calligraphy is filled in with pale pink and green. The colophon, written in yellow gold on green gold states that the manuscript was made for the Treasury of Feridun Pasha.

The leather binding is tooled and gilded with a sunken medallion and spandrel design filled with finely defined lotus and fern stems.

The colophon gives no calligrapher's name or date. The patron, Feridun Pasha, was a statesman known for his literary tastes, who died in 1583. The unusual style of calligraphy appears to be in the style of Ahmed Karahisari (1468–1556), who was famous for his decorative writing.

25 Miniature Qur'an

Iran or India, 17th century
Ink, color, gold on paper, leather binding
Page size: 4.3 cm across

This manuscript, copied on paper of octagonal format, has 220 folios and 23 lines of minute Ghubari script on each page. It is in a stamped and gilded leather binding. Such Qur'ans were often provided with silver covers, while what was perhaps the tiniest copy, a gift to the ruler Timur, fitted into the bevel of a signet ring. The Ghubari script, used for messages carried by pigeon, was well suited for exacting work on such a small scale.


بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم


أخلاق الحيوان سخاء الديك وشجاعة الأسد


فإن ترحم فأنت لذاك أهل

◄ 26 Album of Calligraphy

Copied by al-Faqir Osman al-Aruf Hafiz al-Qur'an

Turkey, second half 17th century
Ink and color on paper; leather binding
Page size: 25 cm × 17 cm

This album consists of eight pages which are identical in format, enlivened with varying detail. Each individual page has a large single line of calligraphy above two shorter lines of smaller script, bracketed by illuminated designs in the lower corners. Each pair of pages has matching borders. Four have marbleized designs, two have a floral trellis and two are splashed with gold. The leather binding has illuminated gold medallions on each flap.

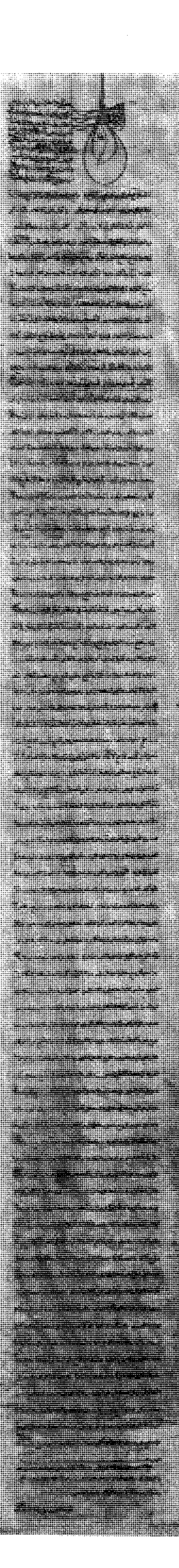
The scribe Hafiz Osman (1642–98) developed his own distinctive style of calligraphy, based on the models of Yaqut al-Mustasimi and Shaikh Hamdullah, which was taken as the canon of perfection by succeeding generations of calligraphers. The Qur'ans in his hand were used as models for printing in the 19th century. Another page of his calligraphy, bearing an identical signature is in the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul (EH 2209, folio 6a, illustrated in M. Uğur Derman, *Türk Hat Sanatinin Şaheserleri*, Istanbul, 1982, no.11). His great piety was legendary, and he instructed both Sultan Mustafa II and Sultan Ahmed III in the art of writing. His biography is given by C. Huart, *Les Calligraphes et les Miniaturistes de L'Orient Musulman*, Paris, 1908, p. 143–45.

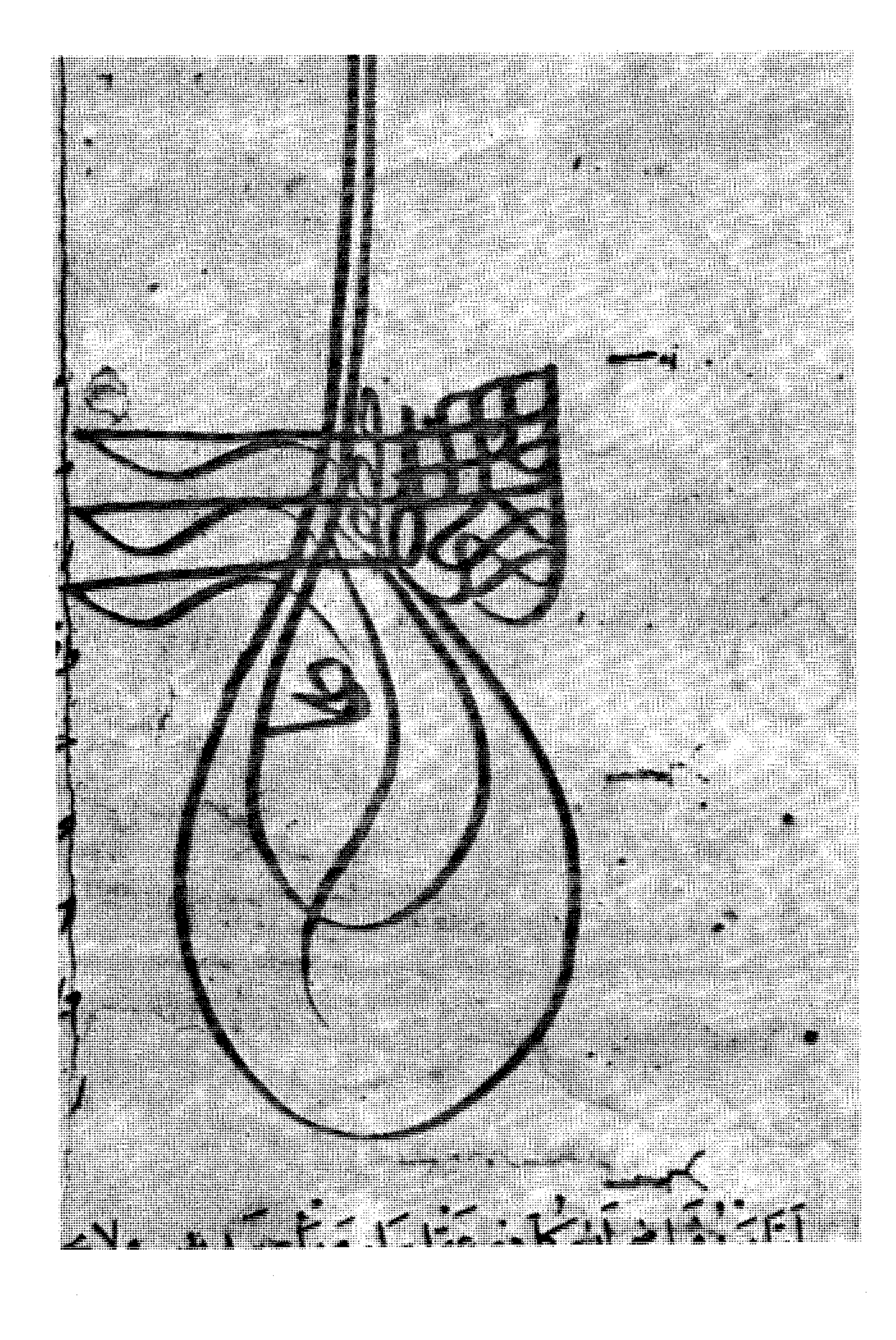
27 Qur'an

India, 18th century
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 26 cm × 15.5 cm

The manuscript is copied on paper with 393 folios and 11 lines to the page. The text is in Naskhi script within gold and red margins. The verse-ends are marked by gold discs, and border illuminations indicate the divisions of verses and sections. There are three double pages of illumination.

This remarkable "symmetrical" Qur'an has been organized in such a way that on every page the first letter of line 1 is the same as the first letter of line 11, the first letter of line 2 the same as in line 10, the first letter of line 3 the same as line 9, and so on. These symmetrical letters are picked out in red, as is the entire word where it occurs symmetrically.





◄ 28 Waqfname

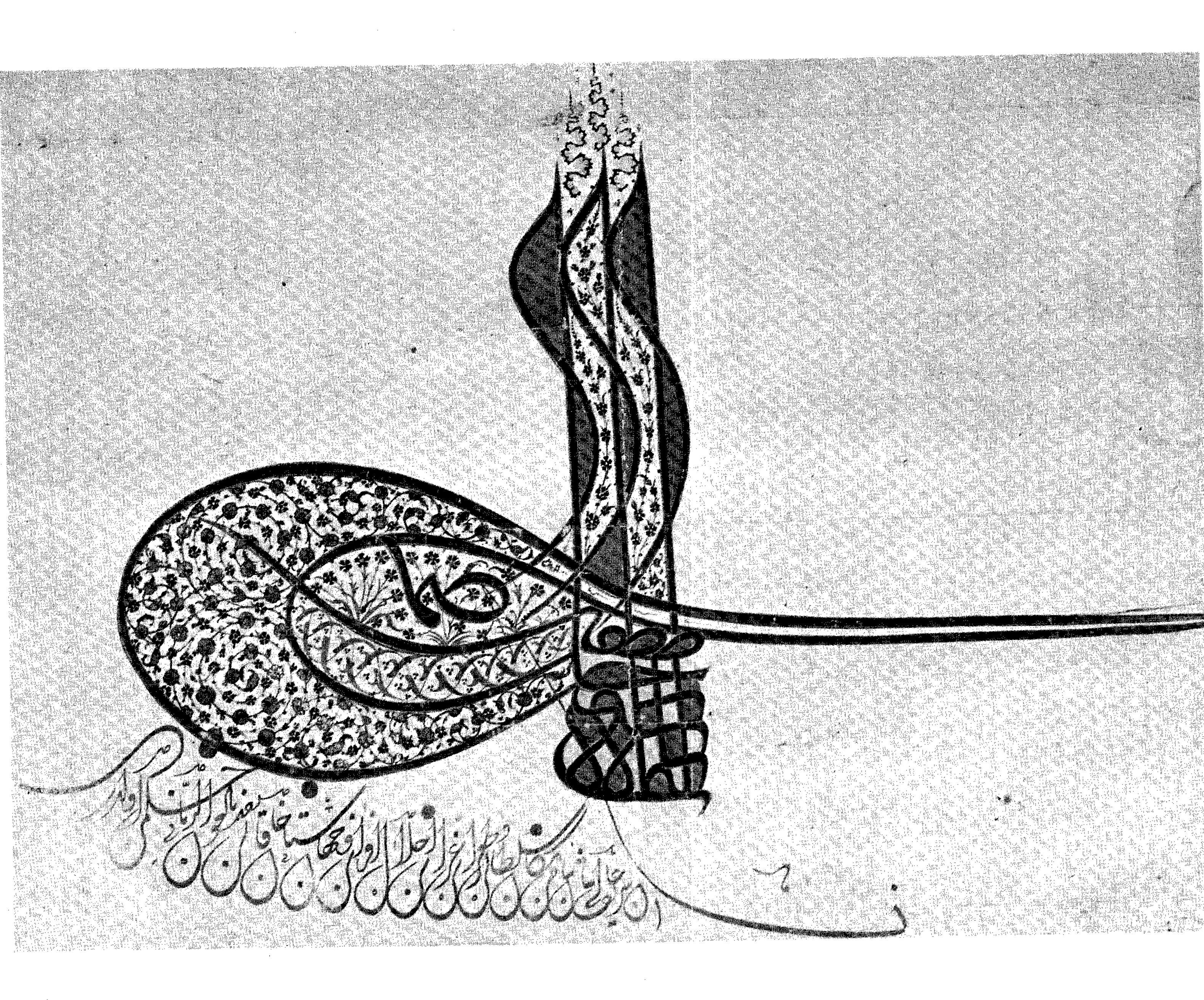
Bearing the Tughra of Süleyman the Magnificent

Turkey, 20 Rabi II 943 AH/6 October 1536 AD
Ink, gold on buff polished paper
Length: 211 cm
Width: 27.4 cm

This scroll of 82 lines of elegant black Naskhi records the Waqf (deed of endowment) of Hanzade Sultan, daughter of the late Sultan Mahmud, verified in the court of Mevlana Hamza Chelebi bin Ibrahim, Qadi of Bursa, and witnessed by six other otherwise unknown persons. It was copied by Pir Mehmed ibn Shukrullah, the pupil and son-in-law of one of the greatest of all Ottoman calligraphers, Shaikh Hamdullah. At the top is the imprimatur of Ebu's-Suud Efendi, Qadi of Istanbul, and to the side is the Tughra of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–66) finely drawn in gold.

According to the Waqf, Princess Hanzade Sultan endowed the village of Abu Toder so that its income should be spent in two ways: to provide the livelihood for 20 persons well-versed in the Qur'an; and to provide for the Madrasa in Bursa. For this purpose she nominated herself as the first Mutavelli (administrator) for her lifetime together with Shaikh ibn Aqa Abdullah. The endowment was made in accordance with the Hanafite school of Islamic jurisprudence.

Dated Tughras of Süleyman the Magnificent are rare. This example is similar to those dating from the beginning of his reign and recalls the one on the letter sent to Francis I in 1526, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. (See Suha Umur, *Osmanli Padişah Tuğralari*, Istanbul, 1980, p.158, for other examples in the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.)



◄ 29 Firman

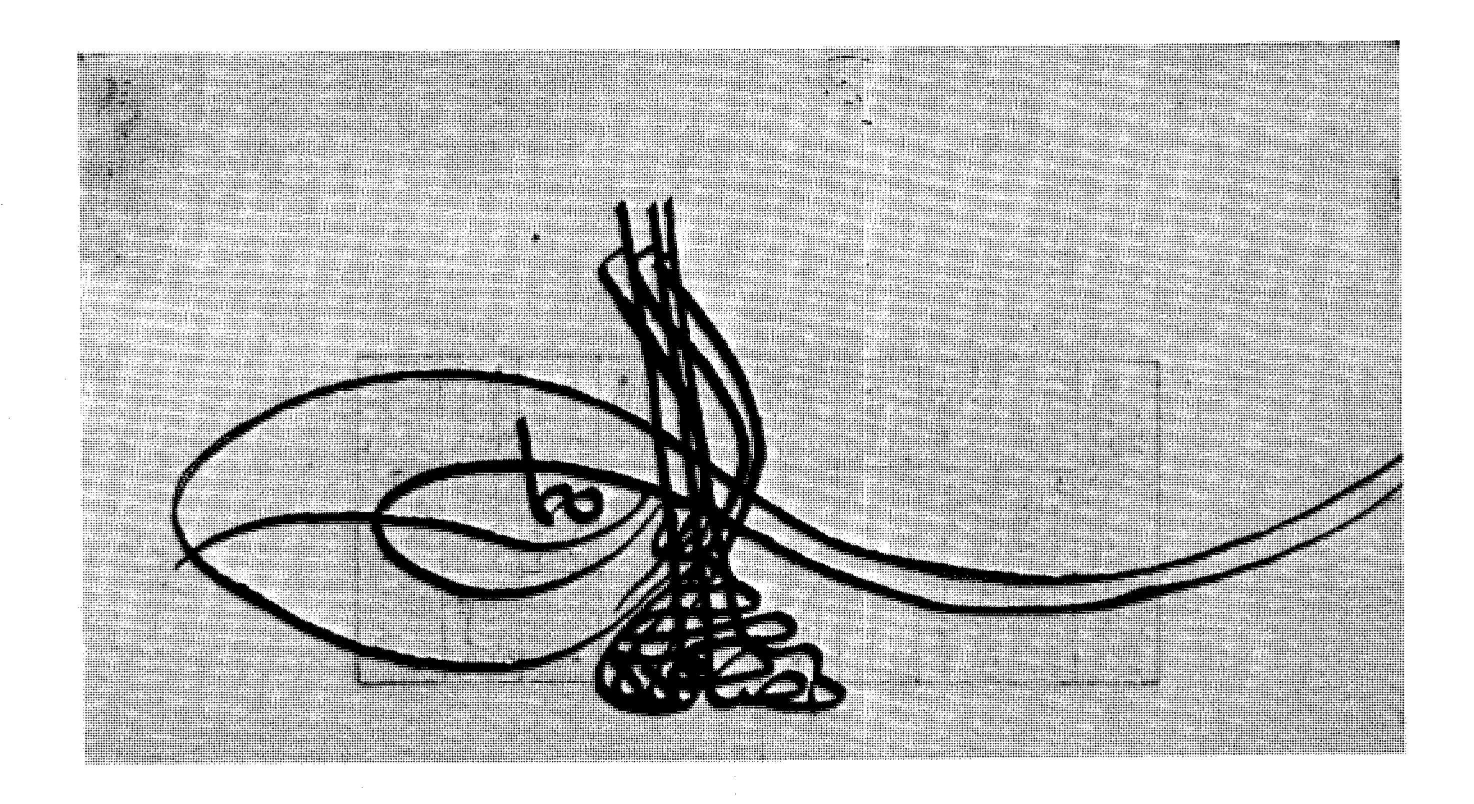
Bearing the Tughra of Süleyman the Magnificent

Ink, color and gold on polished paper
Turkey, 10 Rabi II 973 AH/4th November 1565 AD
Size of Tughra: 19 cm × 33.4 cm
Size of Firman: 77.5 cm × 37.5 cm

The paper of the Firman (imperial edict) is sprinkled with gold and has seven lines of fine Diwani calligraphy. The top line is written in gold, and the lower lines in black, speckled with gold and with gold vocalization marks. The Tughra is painted in blue with gold outlines, and illuminated with exquisite floral designs. The outer horizontal loop is filled with a pattern of gold spiralling and flowering vines, superimposed on a blue flowering vine. Arabesques and carnation sprays adorn the inner loop. The spaces between the interlaced letters are filled in gold and pale pink, with flowers and gold between the vertical bows.

The document was issued in Istanbul the year before Sultan Süleyman's death, and its text, which is incomplete, concerns a grant in the name of Mevlana Nureddin. The decoration of the Tughra underwent a considerable evolution in the course of Süleyman's reign, achieving an extraordinary blend of monumentality and delicacy. While the basic shape of the Tughra remained constant throughout the Ottoman period, each Sultan had his own form dictated by the letters of his name. They were added to imperial edicts by an officer in charge of this function, and prevented forgery.

A similar Tughra is on a Firman dated 959 AH/1551 AD in the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul. E. 7816/2 (see Suha Umur, *Osmanli Padişah Tuğralari*, Istanbul, 1980, p.157). Others are in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (Rogers Fund, 38, 149.1) and in the British Museum, London, no.1949 4–9086 (see J. M. Rogers, *Islamic Art and Design, 1500–1700*, London, 1983, no.32).





◄ 30 Waqfname
Bearing the Tughra of Sultan Mustafa I

Turkey, circa 1617–18 or 1622–23
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 28.8 cm × 15.7 cm

The manuscript has 31 folios, written in Diwani script in black and red, and 13 lines, within gold margins, to the page.

The black Tughra of Sultan Mustafa I sprinkled with gold appears on folio 2a. This provides alternate dates for the document, since he was in power on two separate occasions, from 1617 to 1618 and from 1622 to 1623. Where his name appears in the text, it is written in gold. There are also various marginal notes.

Waqfnames were bound as books, with the Sultan's Tughra included, when they were destined for the State Archive in the Topkapı Palace. This manuscript deals with the allocation of state funds for the upkeep of mosques and public fountains in Istanbul, for the maintenance of public baths and guest-houses, and for the adminstration of bakeries and shops. In considerable detail, it specifies how they should be administered for the public good, gives the names of those in charge of their administration, and indicates from where the funds should be drawn.

31 Firman
Bearing the Tughra of Sultan Mustafa II

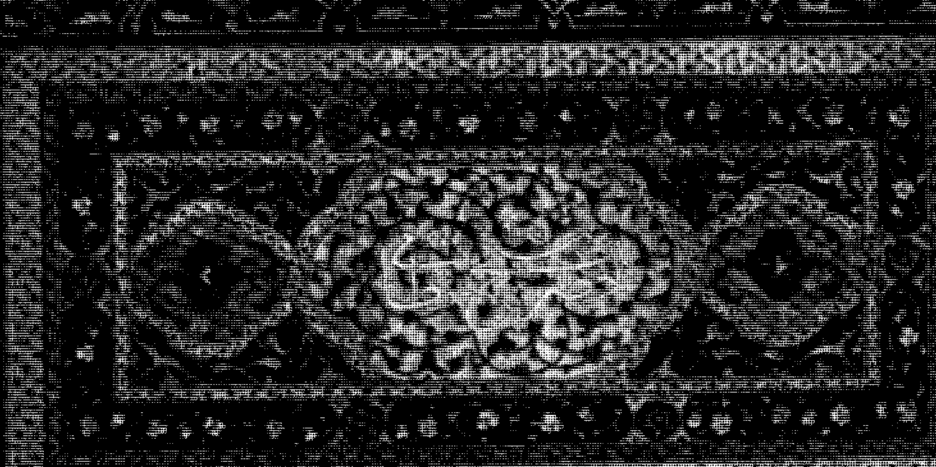
Turkey, 1106 AH/1695 AD
Ink, color, gold, silver on paper
Length: 1.17 m
Width: 42 cm

The Firman has 12 lines of Diwani script, with gold discs interspersed between the lines of text. The Tughra of Sultan Mustafa II (1695–1703) is framed in an exquisitely illuminated triangle of floral patterns and vegetal motifs. The regal effect of generous gold and silver elements in the design has been somewhat diminished by the oxidation of the silver, but it remains a beautiful example of the typical triangular format of 17th century Tughras.

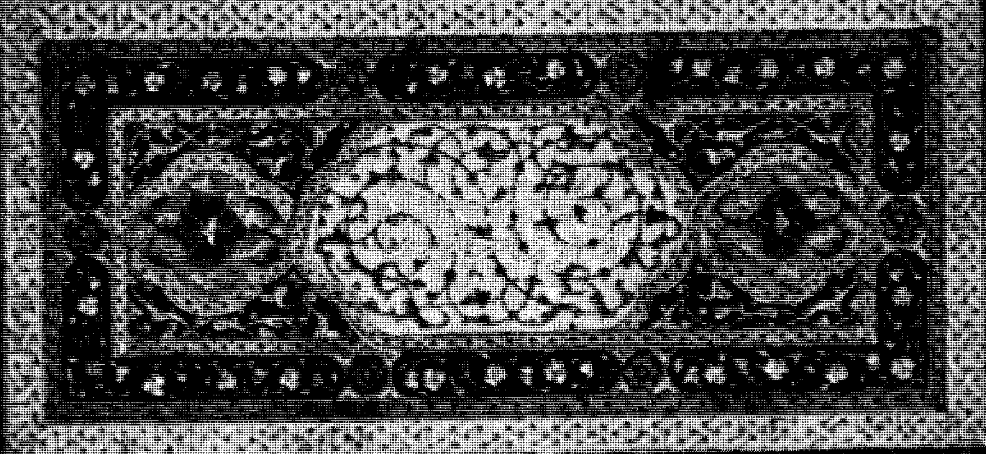
32 Firman
Issued by Emperor Jalal al-Din

India, 21 Jamadi II 24th Regnal Year/13 February, 1783 AD
Ink on paper
Length: 112 cm
Width: 36 cm

This decree was issued by the Mughal ruler, Jalal al-Din, (1760–88 and 1788–1806), in the 24th year of his first reign. It exempts Karpashikaz, son of Chahauram Munajjim, and his children from paying taxes on the proceeds of four villages, including their agricultural produce, livestock, fish and game. On the back there are a number of notations and seals which are contemporary with the document. They include that of the Vizir, Shuja al-Dawla Yahya Khan.







◄ 33 Illuminated Double Frontispiece

Afghanistan, circa 1530
Ink, color, gold on paper
Page size: 22 cm × 13 cm

This double page of illumination originally enhanced a volume of poetry by the great mystic poet Nizami (1140–1209). His five romantic epics which made up the *Khamsa* remain among the most highly-regarded poems in the Persian language. They include the remarkable story of Laila and Majnun, which has been compared to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

The illumination is typical of a style of manuscript decoration developed in Herat in the 15th and 16th century. The very formal arrangement of panels encloses complex and detailed patterns rendered with incredible precision in glowing colours.

34 Collection of Hadith

Copied by Qadi Abu'l-Fazl Ayad bin Musa

Morocco, 18th century
Ink, color, gold on paper; tooled and gilded leather binding
Page size: 22.5 cm × 18 cm

The manuscript has 287 folios written in neat black Maghribi script, with significant words picked out in gold, red and blue. There are a fine illuminated frontispiece and extensive marginal notes in a later hand throughout. It has its original tooled and gilded leather binding.

35 Prayer Book

Copied by al-Hajj Ahmed

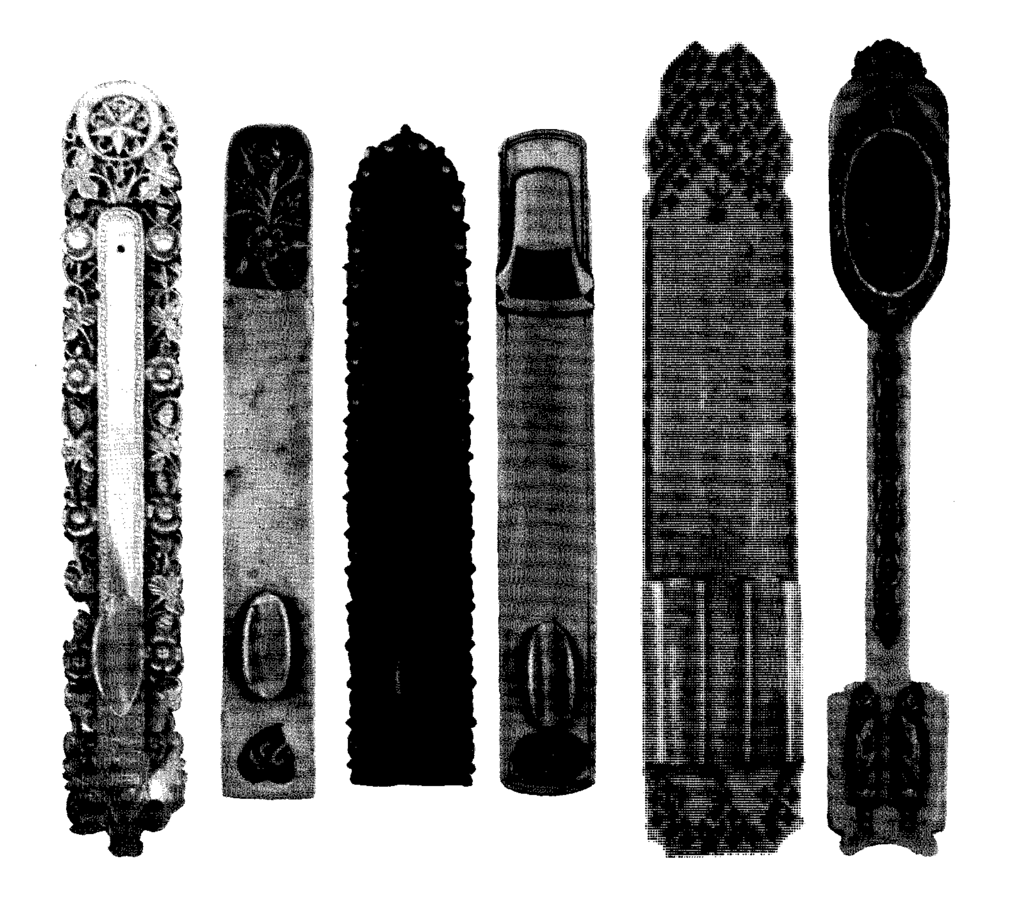
Turkey, 1223 AH/1808 AD
Ink and color on paper; tooled and gilded leather binding
Page size: 15 cm × 10 cm

This manuscript is written in Arabic on buff polished paper. It contains 132 folios, with 11 lines of fine black Naskhi script within gold margins. There is an illuminated double page frontispiece and illuminated headings throughout the text. Gold rosettes mark the verses.

There are 20 full page illuminations. These include the names of Allah and Muhammad and descriptions of the Prophet. Each diagram is finely painted in two tones of gold with pricked detail and color.

Calligraphers' Implements





The sharpened tip of the calligrapher's pen was like the apex of a great pyramid of human endeavor. It involved, beyond the prodigious skill of the calligrapher and the tradition he inherited, many separate groups of specialized craftsmen, who made, dyed, varnished, polished and cut the paper, mixed the ink, ruled the margins and provided illuminations. A variety of implements relating to calligraphy also required the skills of craftsmen in metal, glass, ivory, wood, lacquer and leather.

◄ 36 Makta

Turkey, 19th century

The trimmed reed-pen was laid in a plaque called a Makta, where a raised groove held it in place while the nib was cut.

a. Mother-of-pearl, 16 cm long
b. Ivory, signed Fikri, 14 cm long
c. Tortoiseshell, 13.8 cm long
d. Ivory, inscribed "Ya Hazrat Mevlana" within a Mevlevi Kulah, 14 cm long
e. Double Makta, walrus tusk, 17 cm long
f. Ivory, inscribed "Ya Hazrat Mevlana" in gold beneath a tortoise shell window, 17 cm long

◄ 37 Knives

Turkey, 19th century

a. Steel with gold overlay, stamped on blade with maker's mark, 20.5 cm long. The top of the handle unscrews and contains inside a much smaller knife for splitting the nib, which has a tiny spoon on the end of its handle.

b. Steel blade, jade handle with coral band, stamped on blade with maker's mark, 23 cm long. The end of the jade handle is cut at an angle to produce a surface for polishing paper.

The masters of this craft stamped their seal into the tempered steel of their blades, which had to be razor-sharp in order to fulfil the delicate requirement of perfectly trimming a reed nib.

◄ 38 Scissors

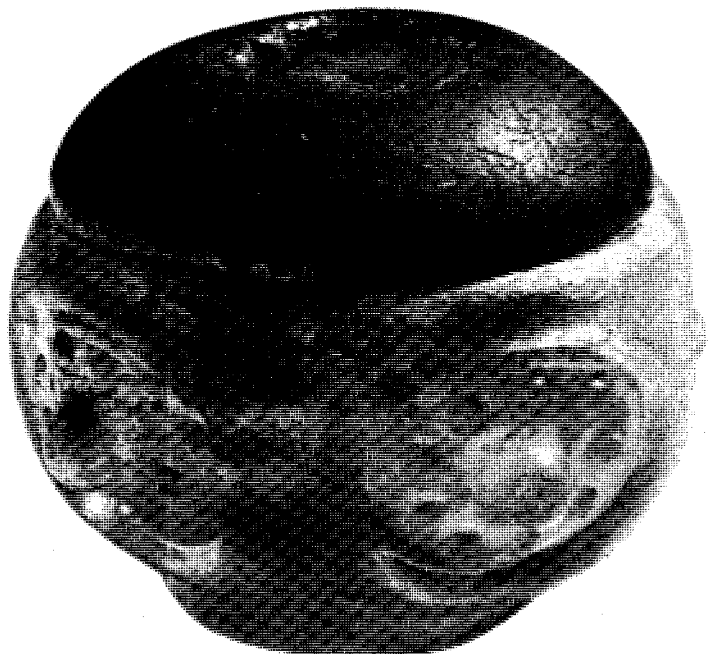
Turkey, 19th century

a. Blued steel and gold overlay, 27 cm long. The handle in calligraphic form of "Ya Fatah."
b. Folding scissors of steel and gold overlay, signed, 22.3 cm long.

◄ 39 Pincers

Turkey, 19th century
Steel with gold overlay
8.9 cm long

For lifting paper cut-outs.





◄ 40 Inkwell

Iran, 8th–9th century
Blown glass
Height: 5 cm

Blown in two contrasting colors, the upper part blue, and the lower part clear with moulded roundels. The technique of using two colors required great skill, as each section had to be blown separately and joined to the other while hot.

◄ 41 Inkwell

Iran or Afghanistan, circa 1200
Bronze or brass inlaid with silver
Height: 10 cm
Diameter: 8 cm

Inscriptions: Various good wishes to the owner.

The cylindrical body of the inkwell is inlaid in silver, with two bands of calligraphy and a row of seated figures between. There are three brackets originally intended to fix cords for carrying the inkwell. The domed lid is similarly decorated with calligraphy and a seated figure on each lobe of the dome.

The inkwell would have been packed with layers of silk to absorb the ink and prevent the nib overfilling. (See J. W. Allan, *Islamic Metalwork: The Nuhad Es-Said Collection*, London, 1982, nos. 1–2).

◄ 42 Pen Case

Egypt(?), 9th–10th century
Ivory
Height: 21.5 cm
Diameter: 4.5 cm

The ivory cylinder is solid except for a narrow central cavity designed to carry a single reed pen. The surface is carved with a diamond-shaped trellis enclosing a four-pointed star motif in each section. This and the following example suggest that a good pen, which might last many years if protected, was a cherished instrument. In fact, the pen is the focus of extravagant metaphors in writings on calligraphy.

43 Pen Case

Turkey, circa 1700
Gilded brass
Length: 22.5 cm

The pen section is shaped to take two reed pens in its double barrels, which have silver tops and chains. The inkwell is faceted, with a floral panel on each section. The lid is silver.

44 Firman Case
Made by Muhammad

Turkey, circa 1800
Ebony and silver
Height: 30 cm

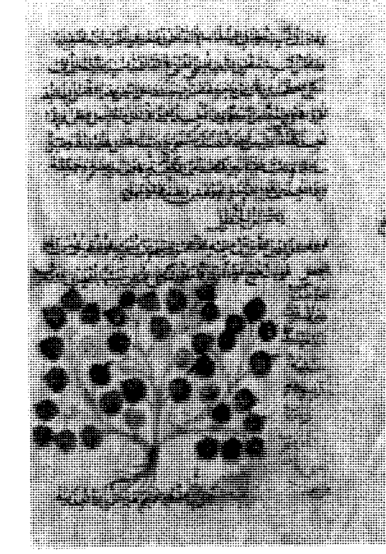
The cylindrical case is made of ebony with silver mounts; a silver inkwell screws into the base.

Science and Learning









◄ 45 Two Pages from Khawass al-Ashjar (De Materia Medica)

Iraq, circa 1200
Ink and color on paper
Page size: 28 cm × 16 cm

Both pages illustrate a medical herb on each side, accompanied by a text discussing the properties and utilization of the plant. The four plants discussed are Hasak, Fara Flumanuum, Hanzal and Afnus.

The author of the text, Dioscorides, travelled in many Mediterranean countries as a surgeon with the armies of the Roman Emperor, Nero. He collected information about plants and their medicinal uses and recorded it in his five-volume work, *De Materia Medica*, about 78. This was first translated into Arabic in Baghdad in the 9th century, at the time of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil, and it became an important source for early Arab pharmacology. The original was similarly illustrated with drawings of plants which the Islamic artists copied and gradually transformed.

Several pages from the same manuscript are known, including one in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, illustrating a plant called Thaniat (no.65.271.1), and another formerly in the collection of Richard Ettinghausen (see *The Arts of Islam*, London, 1976, no.59). Thirteen illustrated copies of this text have survived, as well as several fragmentary sections. The earliest one, which containes 620 images and is dated 1083, is in the University Library, Leiden (Cod. Or.289).

46 The Politics of Aristotle

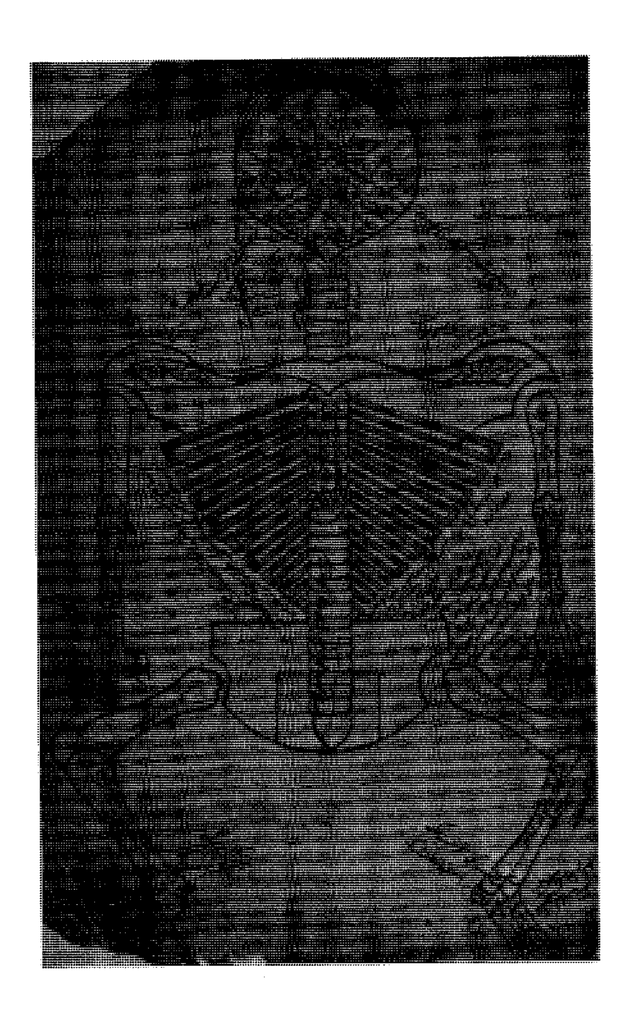
Syria, 13th century
Ink on paper
Page size: 25.3 cm × 18 cm

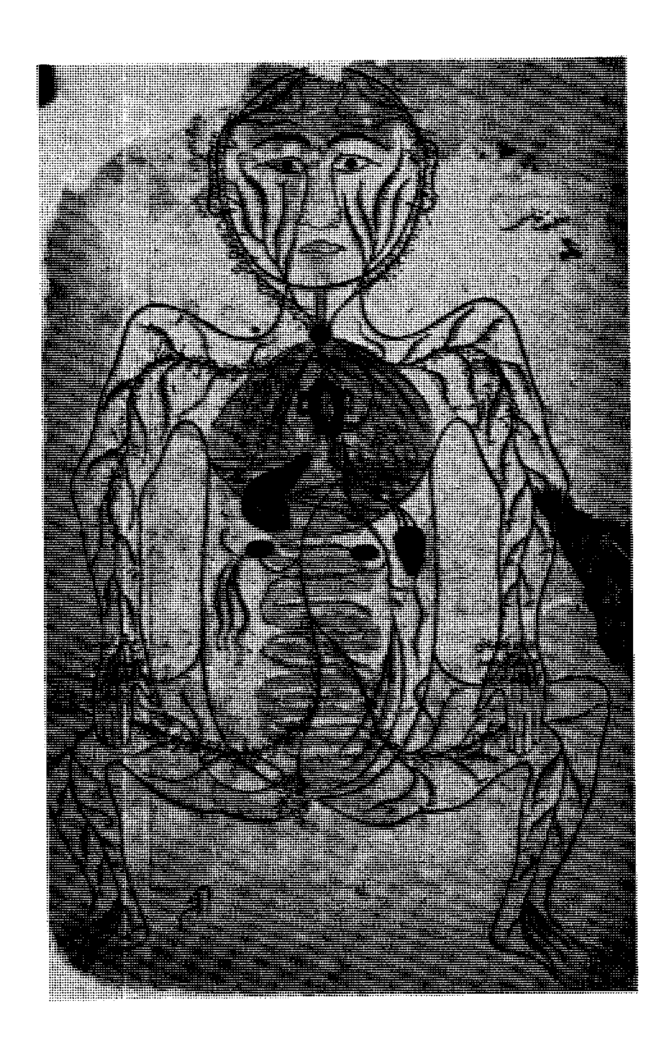
This text was translated from the Greek on the order of the Caliph al-Mansur (745–75) by Yuhana bin al-Batriq. He tells us in the preface that after much searching and effort, he managed to discover this work at Baalbek in the Temple of Abd Shams. It was in the possession of a hermit who was acting as guardian of the temple, and it required much ingenuity to acquire.

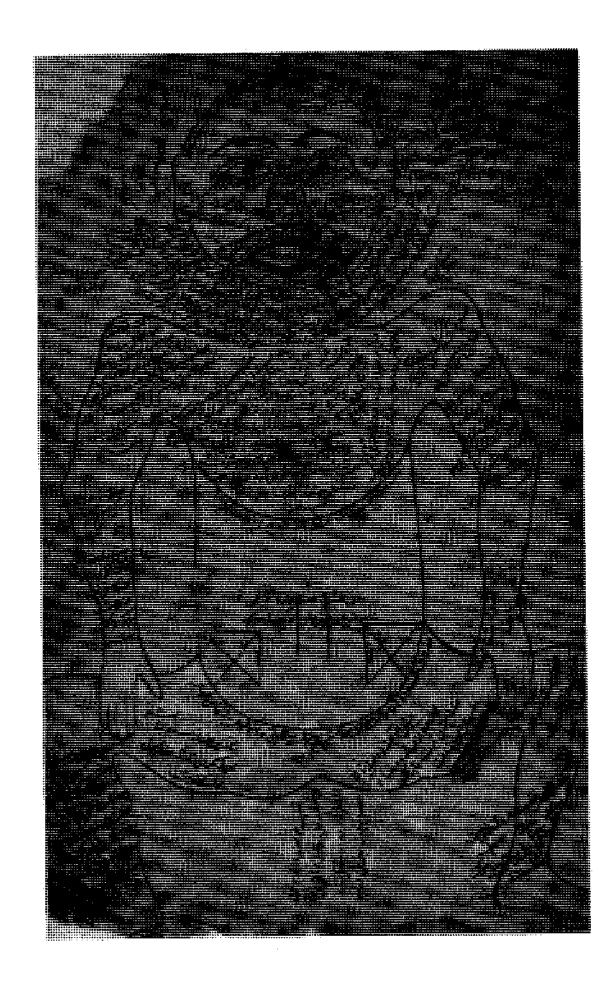
Yuhana bin al-Batriq, who died between 796 and 806, was one of the pioneer translators who worked for al-Mansur and translated the works of Galen, Hippocrates and Ptolemy into Arabic for the first time. Most of the scientific works of antiquity were translated into Arabic between the 8th and 10th centuries, probably the most extraordinary example of cultural transmission that has ever been achieved. One result was that Arabic became an important scientific language for many centuries thereafter.

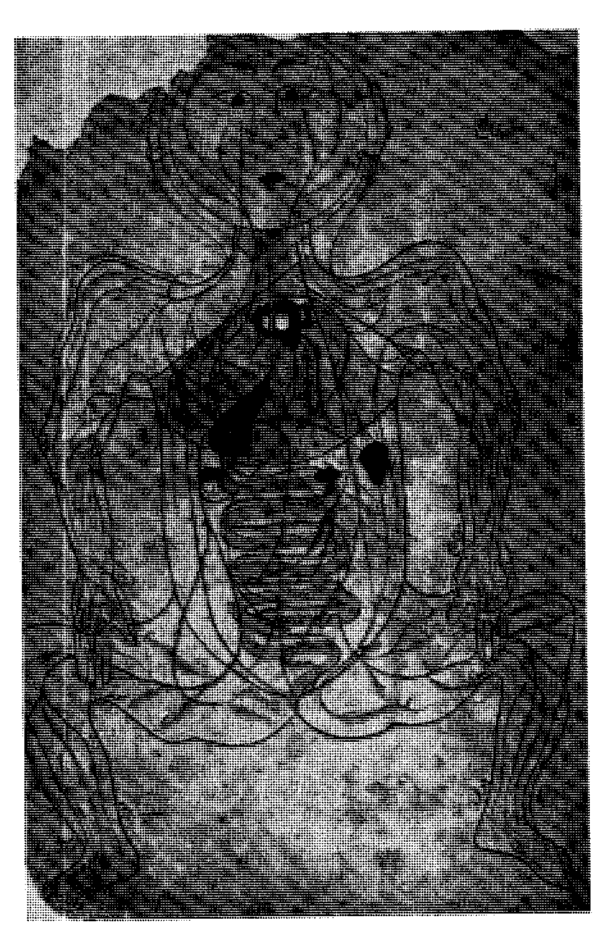
Provenance: Library of Georges Fattalla Balit
Library of Paul Sbath

Published: *Bibliothèque de Manuscrits Paul Sbath*, Cairo, 1929, vol. II, no. 884.









◄ 47 Kitab Tashrih-i Badani-i Insan (Treatise on Human Anatomy)

Iran, 15th century
Ink and paint on paper; tooled leather binding
Page size: 25 cm × 17 cm

This Persian manuscript has 27 folios with 21 lines to the page in fine Naskhi script, and margins ruled in blue and gold. The title is contained in a gold and blue illuminated headpiece. There are five full-page anatomical drawings depicting the skeletal system, the nervous system, the muscular system, the intestinal system and the cardiovascular system. The manuscript has its original tooled leather binding, which is decorated with a central circular medallion and pendants and is stamped in several places with the binder's name, "Muhammad al-Sharif."

This remarkable text was originally composed in 1396 by Mansur bin Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Yusuf bin Faqih Ilyas. At the time, it represented the most developed explanation of anatomy, and it became the standard reference work for centuries. It was dedicated to the Timurid prince, Ziya al-Din Amir-Zadah Pir Muhammad Bahadur Khan, who, after his grandfather Timur's death, was left in charge of the Indian provinces and Zabulistan. The colophon of this copy is unfortunately missing but there are various marginal notes added later, including one with the date 907 (1501).

An earlier version of this treatise, *Tashrih-i Mansuri*, dated 1379, is in the India Office Library, London, Ms. N. 2296. Two other mid-15th century manuscripts of this text are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (see *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts and Miniatures*, vol. I, 1959, Nos. 129–130), and a 19th-century version is in the Historical Collections of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia (see D. Branden, *Islamic Miniature Paintings in Medical Manuscripts*, Basle, 1982, ills. 1–5).

48 Treasury for Ophthalmologists

Syria, 16th century
Ink on paper; leather binding
Page size: 21 cm × 15 cm

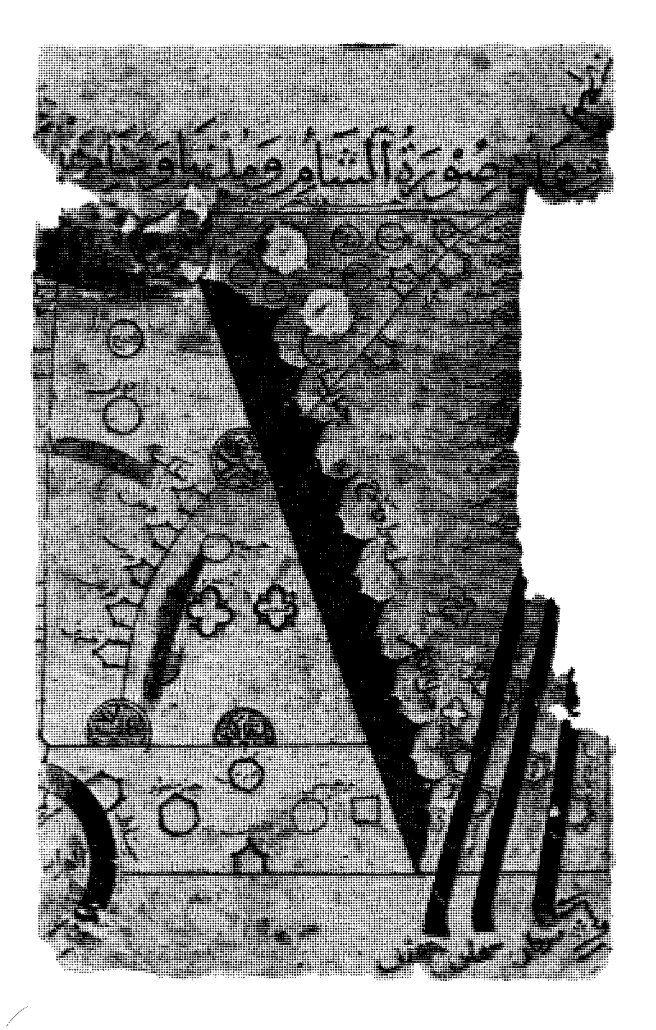
This manuscript consists of 280 pages with 19 lines of script to the page. The Arabic text, written by Ali bin Isa, is perhaps the most famous treatise on ophthalmology. It was influential throughout the Islamic world and was translated into Latin as the *Tractus de Oculis* of Jesu ben Hali. It is divided into three parts, which are subdivided into chapters:

1. The anatomy of the eye, 21 chapters
2. Visible diseases of the eyes, 73 chapters
3. Hidden diseases, 27 chapters

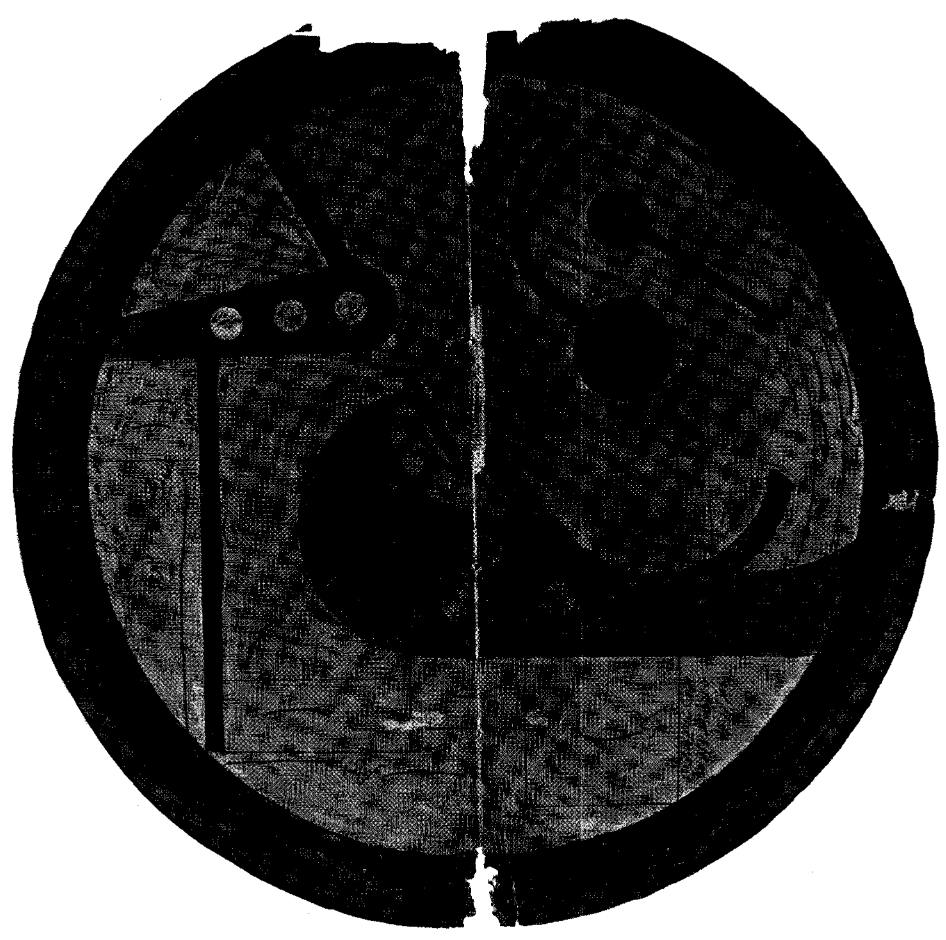
In his discussion of individual diseases, the author indicates both the causes and the remedies of illness. He was obviously well-versed in ocular disease, and was also the first person to propose the use of anesthesia for surgery (see C. A. Wood, *Memorandum of a Tenth-Century Oculist, for the Use of Modern Ophthalmologists*, Chicago, 1936).

Provenance: Library of Paul Sbath.

Published: *Bibliothèque de Manuscripts Paul Sbath*, Cairo, 1928, vol. II, no. 1077.


صورة الشام





◄ 49 Map of Syria

Top left

Syria, 13th century
Ink and color on paper
Page size: 31.5 cm × 20.7 cm

This rare and early map is basically accurate in spite of its stylization and the reversal of North and South. With striking artistry, it shows a pink domed mountain range, the infringing blue semicircle of the Euphrates and the three blue stripes of the rivers. The inscription, written in gold along the top, says that the map shows Syria's cities.

The inception of Islamic cartography is associated with the Bayt al-Hikmat (House of Wisdom) established in 830 by the Caliph al-Ma'mun. There, numerous scholars worked under the direction of the mathematician al-Khwarazmi to produce the first Islamic world map. This map of Syria probably derives from an atlas like those of the famous geographers, al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal.

◄ 50a Map of the Arabian Peninsula

Top right

Iran, 15th century
Ink and color on paper
Page size: 27.5 cm × 16.5 cm

This painting is from the same manuscript as the next map. The land is sand colored, with towns represented as discs painted gold, orange, blue, green and yellow. Originally the sea was probably silver, which has oxydized into gray. North and South are reversed.

The title at the top of the page indicates that the map shows Medina, the town of the Prophet, which is one of the few places identified by an inscription. The other places were probably originally identified in a facing text according to a color code. The circular body of water apparently represents the gulf between Oman and Qatar. In the approximate area of Kuwait an orange strip between the unexpected mountain and the sea is identified as the "Red Sand." Iraq is shown at the bottom of the map, with Baghdad and Basra identified, as well as the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. Kharg Island looms large in the Gulf.

◄ 50b Map of the World

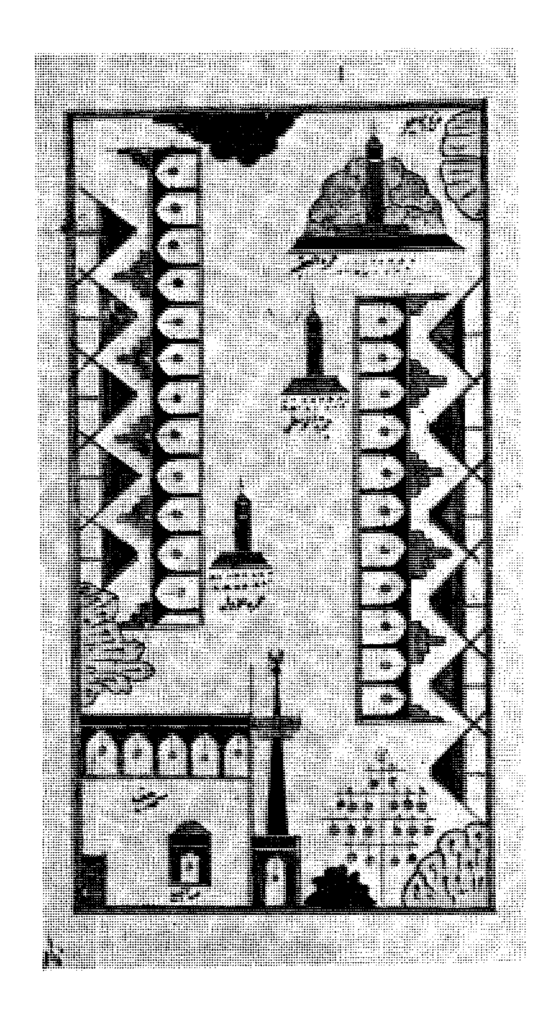
Bottom

Iran, 15th century
Ink, color on paper
Double page size: 27.5 cm × 33 cm

The land on the map is painted lavender, the sea is gray (originally silver which has oxidized) and a gold band encircles the whole. Persian inscriptions in red Nastaliq name the countries, and Arabic inscriptions have been added later in black. On the reverse is fine Nastaliq with gold margins.

The diagrammatic conception of the world shown in this map is based on the work of the important Arab geographer, Ibn Hawqal (943–77). He completely revised the book of a contemporary geographer, al-Istakhri, and entitled it *al-Masalik w'al-Mamalik.* This map and no. 50a probably derive from a later Persian translation of this text.





51 Leaf from an Arabic Travel Book

Syria or Egypt, 12th/13th century
Ink, color on paper
Page size: 28 cm × 19 cm

The page apparently derives from a manuscript describing distant places, exotic people and natural oddities.

The first Islamic geographical works were written in the 9th century during the reign of the Caliph al-Mamun. Initially they relied on translations of Indian and Greek texts, but soon, because of the easy access to all lands within the Dar al-Islam, the science of geography was developed far beyond its previous limits. Foremost among geographical writers was Abu Rayan al-Biruni (973–c.1050). The great traveler, Ibn Battuta, made a voyage from Tangiers to India between 1325 and 1349. His book *Tuhfat al-Nuzzar* remains an invaluable record of geographical, topographical, religious, historical and ethno-graphical material of the period.

◄ 52 Guide to Makkah and Medina

Autograph copy of the author, Ghulam Ali

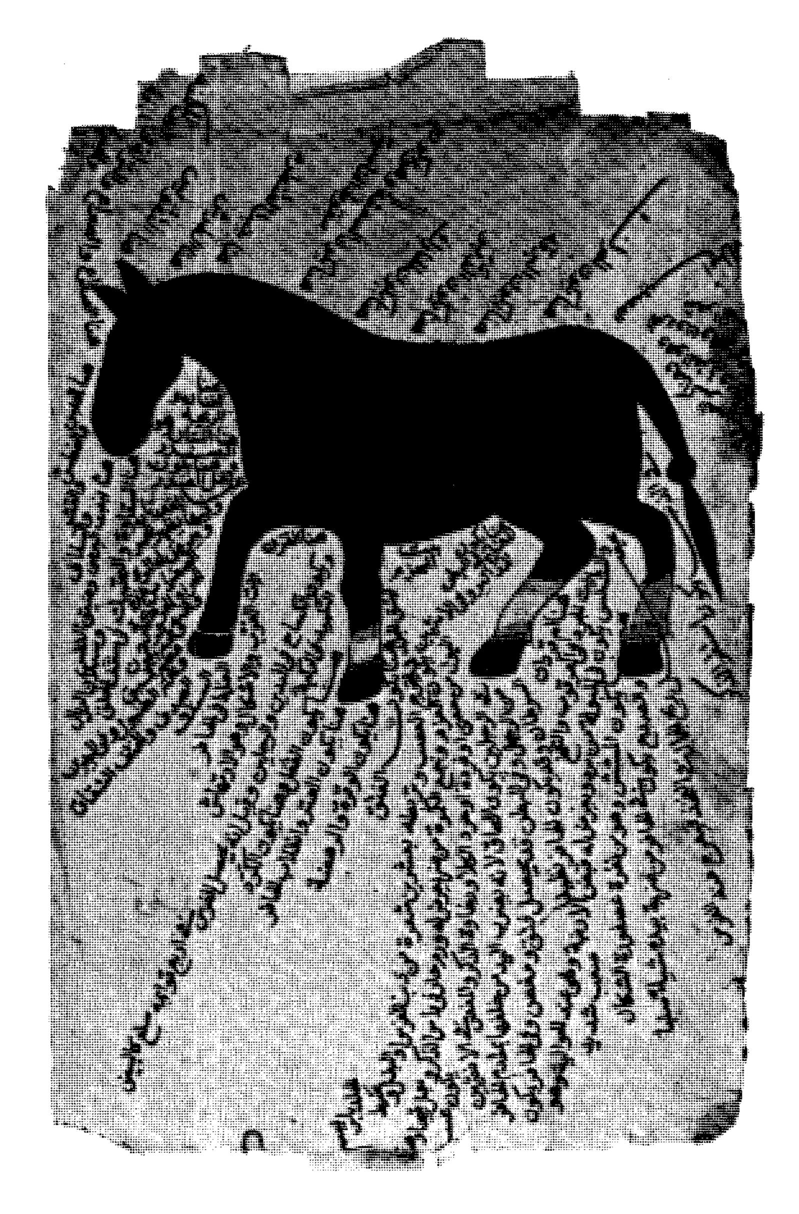
Cover illustration

Saudi Arabia, Jamadi II 990 AH/June 1582 AD
Ink and paint on polished paper; stamped and gilded leather binding
Page size: 21.8 cm × 14 cm

The text, in 43 pages, gives a detailed description in verse of the Pilgrimage and all that is to be seen, as well as a history of the foundation of Makkah. The author states that the idea of writing this book occurred to him one night in Makkah when he was unable to sleep.

Folio 19b. The Sacred Sanctuary in Makkah
21a. View of Safa Gate
22b. Mountain of Abu Qabis and the Dar al-Khizran, the house where Omar was converted to Islam
23b. Birthplace of Muhammad, Ali, Fatima and Siddiq Store.
25b. The cemetery of Arsa Mualla; the ponds called Shami, Misri and Ali; Rayat Mosque
26a. Birthplace of Omar, Hamza and Shaikh Abdul Kabir
26b. Nur Mountain and Havra Cave
27a. Thour Mountain
30a. Mt. Arafat and pilgrim tents
31b. Mazdalfa Mosque
33b. Jumarat
37b. Mufarra Mountain and Mosque of Ali
39a. City of Medina, its gates, Fatima dome, the Prophet's treasury
40b. Baqi Cemetery
41a. Mosque of Qaba
42a. Mosque of the Two Qiblas
42b. Uhud Mountain, Tomb of Hamza, Groves of the Martyrs of Uhud





53 Treatise on the Illness of Horses

Syria, 12th-13th century
Ink on paper
Page size: 19.2 cm × 14 cm

This Arabic manuscript includes 80 folios with 13 lines of black script to the page and frequent marginal notes.

The title of the text is missing, but it is perhaps the treatise by Ahmad bin al-Hasan bin al-Ahnas, of which a copy, dated 606 (1209), is in the National Library, Cairo.

Dealing with the care of horses, it is one of the relatively few extant veterinary texts. Evidence suggests that this science was taught and disseminated orally.

◄ 54 Illustrations from an Anatomical Study of the Horse

Egypt, 16th century
Ink and color on paper
Page size: 30 cm × 20.5 cm

These illustrations derive from an Arabic manuscript, copied on paper with 13 lines of text per page. They include the following:

1. Anatomical diagram of a horse, showing its internal structure
2, Nomenclature of the parts of a horse
3. Ideal characteristics of a horse
4. Mare, and indications of readiness for mating
5. Mare in foal
6. Horse and dog

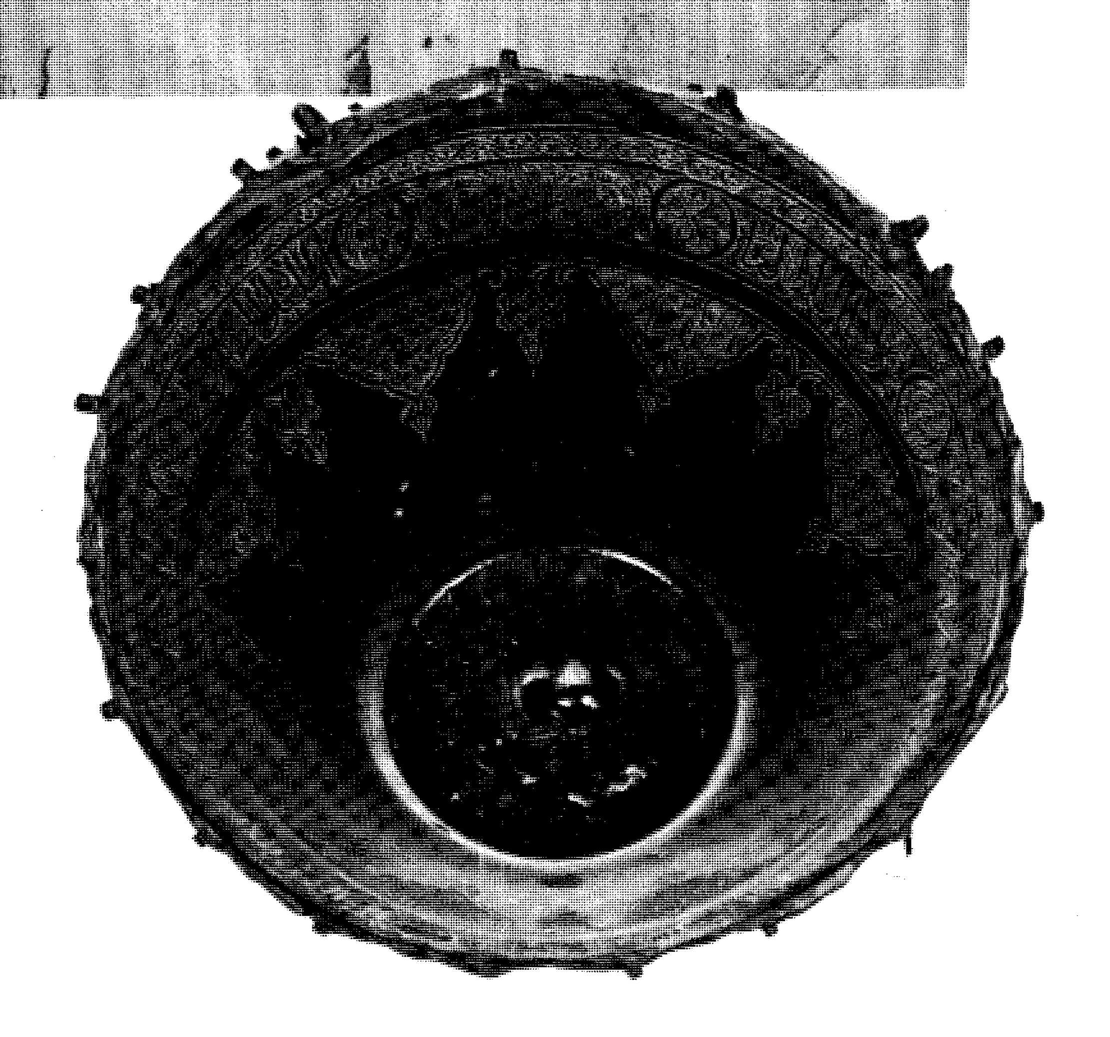
While few illustrated veterinary texts are available for comparison, the use of flat bold color and clear schematic forms appears well suited to the subject matter.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وبه ثقتي [illegible]

[illegible]

الباب الأول في ذكر [illegible] الباب

[illegible]



◄55 Kitab al-Dawari w'al-Jawarih (Treatise on Falconry)

Syria, 13th century
Ink and color on paper
Page size: 24 cm × 16 cm

The first pages of this manuscript relate the circumstances under which the text was composed. The Byzantine emperor sent a book on falconry to the Caliph al-Mahdi (775–85). He, in turn, ordered the principal court falconer, Adham bin Muhriz al-Bahili, to compile a comprehensive work on general falconry, collating all relevent writings including those of the Persians, Turks and Byzantines, and comparing them with Arab knowledge and experience.

This is the only known complete copy of Adham's work, and it is earlier in date than the other documented fragmentary sections. The title page states that this manuscript was copied from the book of the Maghribi Vizir Amir Shikar, which was dated 620 (1223), and that this copy is the most correct one available. A later annotation on the title page is dated 933 (1526).

The manuscript has 65 folios, with 11 lines of clear Naskhi per page. Headings executed in red ink identify 116 chapters. Chapters 1–107 deal with hunting with birds of prey and the remaining chapters concern the art of hunting with dogs and cheetahs. It deals exhaustively with such subjects as the care and feeding of birds, the treatment of damaged feathers and illnesses, and the training and use of hunting birds.

◄56 Falconer's Drum

Turkey or Syria, late 15th/early 16th century
Brass
Height: 9 cm
Diameter: 18 cm

Drums of this nature were often used by falconers to signal birds. This is evident in depictions of hunting parties in many miniature paintings as well as in the inscriptions on another drum dating from the Safavid period. In that example, the drum is engraved with a poem which specifically refers to a hawking drum (see A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World*, London, 1982, no.136). Drums were also used for martial and ceremonial purposes.

The body of this drum is cast in brass with inscribed ornamentation concentrated in a zone around the stretched skin head. The main component of the decoration is an inscription of imperial tone set on a patterned ground. Double lines define various areas of geometric and vegetal patterns.



◄ 57 The Arctic Tern

India, circa 1620
Ink and color on paper
Painting size: 16 cm × 7·3 cm

This image reflects a 17th-century development in the painting traditions of India as well as Iran. At that time, artists began painting subjects derived from the natural world rather than from poetry or other commonly illustrated texts. Such pictures could be sold separately or combined with samples of calligraphy to form albums for leisurely perusal.

In India, this trend may have resulted in part from an experience in the life of the Emperor Jahangir. Travelling in Kashmir in the spring of 1620, he was so entranced by the natural beauty of the area that he instructed his court painter Mansur to paint all of the different blossoms he saw (see R. Skelton, "A Decorative Motif in Mughal Art," in *Aspects of Indian Art*, London, 1970, pp. 147–52). Such flower paintings, along with depictions of birds and animals, make up a significant part of the Mughal artistic legacy.

The precise observation in this painting supposes that a bird must have been caught in the course of its migration and presented to the artist. The almost calligraphic rendering of its lines well suggests the extraordinary nature of the arctic tern, which undertakes the largest migration of any bird in the world, all the way from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back again each year. It was of great interest to mariners who took their bearings from its flight-path.



◄ 58 Spouted Cup

Iran, 9th–10th century
Blown green glass
Height: 5.7 cm
Diameter: 3.8 cm

This vessel, free-blown of green glass, has a distinctive asymmetrical shape which implies a particular purpose. A clue to its function is provided in a 13th-century copy of the Maqamat of al-Hariri. There, a similar cup is being used by a doctor performing a bloodletting operation (Oriental Institute, Academy of Sciences, Leningrad, Ms. 523, folio 328).

◄ 59 Crucible

Iran, 9th–10th centuries
Brass
Length: 17.5 cm

A crucible is designed to withstand considerable heat and to decant liquefied substances. Such a utilitarian purpose clearly did not prevent the craftsman from exercising his creativity and aesthetic judgment. In the example illustrated, the spout is carefully balanced by flanges which are enhanced with Kufic inscriptions set against a foliate background. A comparable example was published with the suggestion that this type of vessel was used to refine indigo. (A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World,* London, 1982, nos. 13–15).

Provenance: Henri René d'Allemagne Collection

◄ 60 Mortar

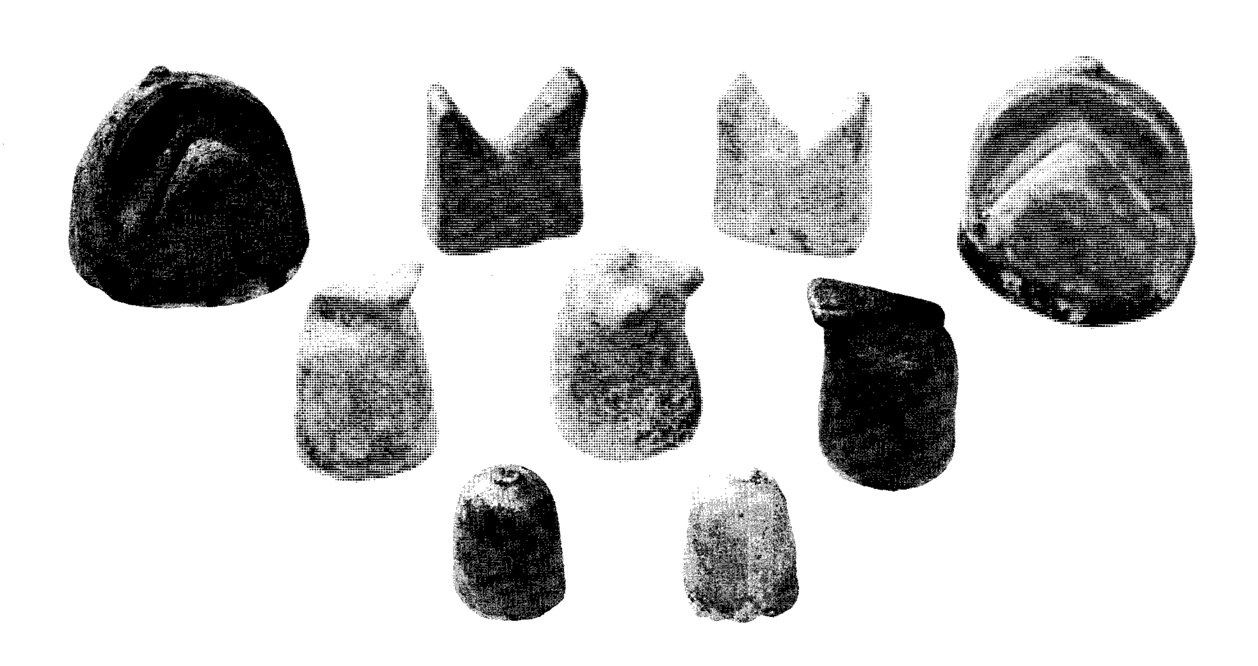
Turkey or Iran, 12th century
Brass
Height: 13 cm
Diameter: 19.5 cm

The mortar was used for both culinary and medical purposes as a container in which to pulverize solid substances. Such objects were quite common and were frequently depicted in manuscript illustration as, for example, in "Physician and his attendant preparing a cataplasm" from a manuscript of Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica* (see E. Atıl, *Art of the Arab World*, Washington, D.C., 1975, no.25).

◄ 61 Weight

Stamped with the Tughra of Sultan Mahmud II
Turkey, circa 1803–39
Brass
Height with loop: 21.5 cm

This weight, used as a standardized measure in commercial transactions, was frequently subjected to official verification. On each occasion it was stamped with the Tughra of the Sultan on the side panel to indicate that it conformed with the requirements of the Ottoman bureaucracy.





◄ 62 Chess Pieces

Iran, 12th century
Ceramic with cobalt and turquoise glaze
Size of pieces: between 3.2 cm and 5 cm high

The origin of chess is unknown. The game probably began in India and was brought to Iran sometime before the 7th century. Masudi, an Arab author writing around 950, stated that the game existed long before his time. It was the Arabs who became particularly proficient at playing chess blind-folded, and the Arabs who introduced the game to Europe through Spain and Italy.

This particular set of 23 pieces is one of the most complete extant. The forms of the pieces, seemingly standardized at this period, may be compared with those in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (no. 1971.193 a–ff), and with the rock crystal set dated to 11th-century Egypt, which is now in the Kuwait National Museum (see M. Jenkins, Islamic Art in the Kuwait National Museum: The al-Sabah Collection, London, 1983, p.60)

◄ 63 Chess Piece

Iran, 10th century
Green steatite-type stone
Height: 5 cm

This stepped chess man probably represents the king. It is carved all over with foliate and geometric motifs.



The Science of Astronomy and the Astrolabe

The ability of Islamic civilization to perfect what it inherited, and to endow what it made with beauty, is nowhere better expressed than in the astrolabe. The technology for making an astrolabe was inherited from the Greeks and its invention is credited to the astronomer Hipparchos of Nicea in the 2nd century BC. The basic scientific principles were described by the Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy, whose *Planispherium* was translated into Arabic in Baghdad by Hunain ibn Ishaq (809–73), a brilliant linguist, scientist and physician. Using the knowledge of the ancients and their own observation as a basis for experimental research, the Arab astonomers of the 10th century made the most extraordinary scientific advances. These included measuring the circumference of the earth to within 3.6 per cent accuracy, compiling astronomical charts of the motion of planets and determining the shape of their orbits. Their work was not only of importance for the Islamic world, but also for Europe where a Latin translation of Mashallah's text on astrolabes was already available in 1276. Much of this knowledge was made possible by the accuracy and flexibility of the astrolabe, aptly called the 'mathematical jewel'.

The astrolabe is an early form of computer, which simulates the apparent rotation of the stars in the sky about the celestial pole. It may be used to solve many astronomical and astrological problems as well as for navigation and surveying, for telling the exact time of day or night (essential for fixing the times of prayer), and as an accurate calendar for predicting the seasons. On the planispheric astrolabe, the celestial sphere is represented on a flat surface by a mathematical process known as stereographic projection, as a flat map represents the globe. This allows circles to be transferred from a sphere to a flat surface without distortion and retains the true value of an angle between two lines drawn on a sphere. Thus, line horizon, tropics, equator and ecliptic remain circles, or parts of circles.

◄ 64 Planispheric Astrolabe

Made by Hamid bin Mahmud al-Isfahani

Iran, 547 AH/1152–3 AD
Brass
Diameter: 13.15 cm

Signed on the back, this astrolabe is the only published instrument made by Hamid bin Mahmud al-Isfahani. Two of his sons were also metal workers: Muhammad bin Hamid al-Isfahani, the maker of four surviving astrolabes; and Masud bin Hamid bin Mahmud al-Isfahani al-Asturlabi, of whose work there only survives a pen box.

This piece is similar to other 11th and 12th century examples from Iran. It is finely engraved and inscribed in Kufic, and it exhibits the two holes adjoining the suspension ring that are associated with the first Islamic astrolabes. It has a high throne, pierced with a foliated design, and a simple rete with dagger-shaped pointers identifying 27 stars. It has three plates.

Provenance: Negrotto Collection
Samuel Verplanck Hoffman Collection
New York Historical Society
National Museum of American History Smithsonian Institution
Linton Collection

(*continued*)



Published: R. T. Gunter, *The Astrolabes of the World*, Oxford, 1932, no.4.
G. Wiet, *L'Epigraphe Arabe de l'Exposition d'Art Persan*, Cairo, 1935, p.14.
E. Combe, J. Sauvaget, G. Wiet, *Répertoire Chronologique d'Epigraphie Arabe*, Cairo, 1937, p.263.
A. U. Pope, *Survey of Persian Art*, Oxford, 1939, vol. III.
M. Aga-Oglu, "Two Astrolabes of the late Safavid Period," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, 1947, p.83.
L. A. Mayer, *Islamic Astrolabes and their Works*, Geneva, 1957, p.46.
D. S. Price, S. L. Gibbs, J. A. Henderson, *A Computerised Checklist of Astrolabes*, Yale University, 1973, no.4.
J. D. North, "The Astrolabe," *Scientific American*, Jan. 1974, vol. 230, no.1, p.98.
A. Brieux, F. Maddison, *Répertoire des Facteurs d'Astrolabes et de leurs Oeuvres*, Paris, to be published.

◄ 65 Planispheric Astrolabe
Made by Ahmad bin Husayn bin Baso

Spain, 704 AH/1304–5 AD
Brass
Diameter: 16.5 cm

This astrolabe is solidly made and finely decorated. Inscribed in Maghribi script, it has nine plates, an unusually large number. Two of them are later replacements. The instrument is signed by the craftsman on the back, and three other astrolabes signed by him are also known.

The maker of this astrolabe, Abu Jafar Ahmad bin Husayn bin Baso (d. 1309–10), was a famous astronomer and Muwaqqit of the Grand Mosque of Granada when the kingdom of Granada flourished under the Nasrids. According to the historian, Ibn al-Khatib, he was taught by his father and became unique in his time for the construction of scientific instruments. His work, known for the beauty of its inscriptions, its balanced design and the accuracy of the star positions, surpassed that of the Andalusi makers of earlier eras. People of the period vied with each other to buy Ahmad bin Husayn's instruments.

Provenance: Samuel Verplanck Hoffman Collection
New York Historical Society
National Museum of American History Smithsonian Institution
Linton Collection

Published: R. T. Gunter, *Astrolabes of the World*, Oxford, 1932, vol. 1, p.289, no.144.
H. Michel, *Traité de l'Astrolabe*, Paris, 1947, p.181.
H. M. Holloway, *Check-list of the Samuel Verplanck Hoffman Collection of Astrolabes*, New York, 1946, p.68.
L. A. Mayer, *Islamic Astrolabes and their Works*, Geneva, 1957, p.35.
"Relojes de Sol Musulmanes," *Al-Andalus*, vol.XXIII, 1958, fasc. 2. p.400.
D. S. Price, S. L. Gibbs, J. A. Henderson, *A Computerized Checklist of Astrolabes*, Yale University, 1973, no.144.
S. L. Gibbs, G. Saliba, *Planispheric Astrolabes from the National Museum of American History*, Washington, D.C., 1984, pp.137–39.
A. Brieux, F. Maddison, *Répertoire des Facteurs d'Astrolabes et de leurs Oeuvres*, Paris, to be published.



◄ 66 Planispheric Astrolabe
Made by Muhammad Mahdi bin Muhammad Amin al-Yazdi

Iran, circa 1660
Brass set with turquoise
Diameter: 11.75 cm

This astrolabe, originally set with 24 turquoises of which one is now missing, exhibits extraordinarily fine engraving. Its superior design and detailed notations make it convenient to use and to read. The rete is made for 25 stars with leaf-shaped star-pointers engraved with the names of the stars.

It was made by Muhammad Mahdi ibn Muhammad Amin al-Yazdi, the craftsman responsible for at least twelve other recorded astrolabes. The other examples, ranging in date from 1659 to 1668, provide an approximate date for this one.

Provenance: Linton Collection

Published: R. T. Gunter, *The Astrolabes of the World*, Oxford, 1932, pls. XL-XLI.
D. S. Price, S. L. Gibbs, J. A. Henderson, *A Computerised Checklist of Astrolabes*, Yale University, 1973, p.366–67.

67 Calendar

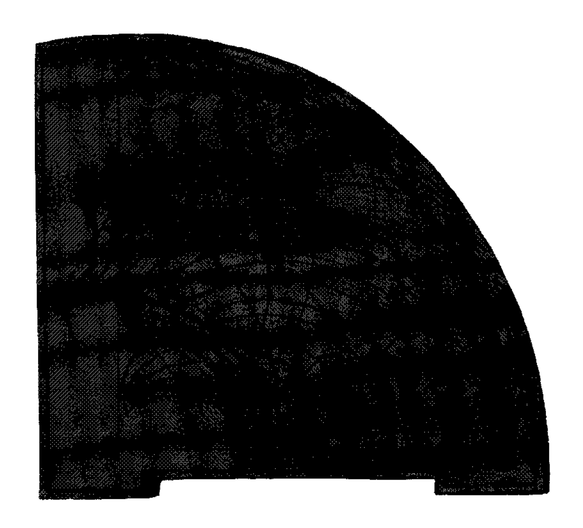
Turkey, circa 1804
Ink, color and gold on paper; mounted on wood
Height: 44.7 cm
Width: 36.8 cm

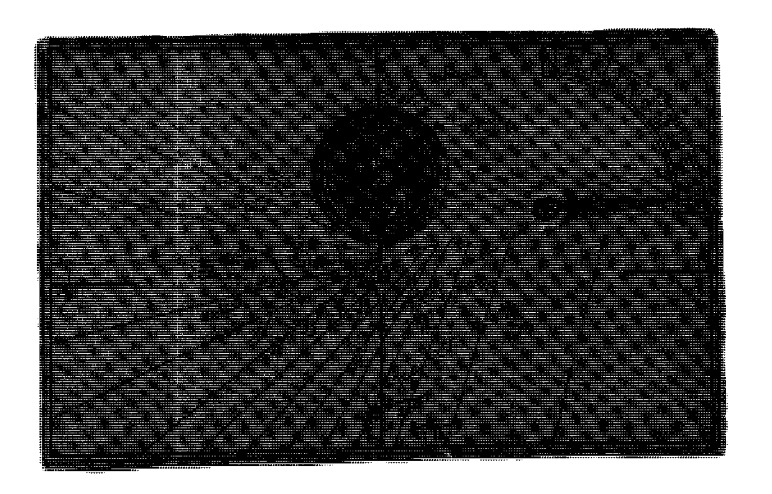
This is an elaborate calendar which was painted on paper and then mounted on wood. In the cartouche at the top is a Turkish poem about time, and in each corner is a floral bouquet. The months appear in the disks in the outermost ring of the circular calendrical portion of the piece. The days are noted in the inner ring of smaller disks while the years are indicated on the spokes which radiate from the center. By rotating the inner circle in relation to the outer ring, the calendar could be adjusted for accuracy from 1804 to 1925.

68 Treatise on Astrology

Turkey, 1232 AH/1816–17 AD
Ink and color on paper
Page size: 17 cm × 12 cm

This Turkish manuscript consists of 144 folios on which the text is copied in black ink and important words or phrases are executed in red. It is supplemented with numerous representations of the zodiacal signs and the heavenly spheres, and accompanied by tables and diagrams. The circular format of many of the paintings, and their thinly applied color, give a technical text considerable aesthetic appeal.





◄ 69 Celestial Globe

Made by Muhammad Salih Tatawi

India, 1074 AH/1664 AD
Brass
Diameter: 26 cm

This globe is dated and signed by Muhammad Salih Tatawi, a third generation craftsman from a family of remarkable astrolabists in Lahore. The globe was cast in one piece, while the stand probably dates from the 18th century. An inscription added in Negari script includes a dedication to the shrine at Nathdawara and suggests that it was the gift of the astronomer Prince Jai Singh.

The thousand fixed stars, denoted with silver inlay, are set within finely-engraved pictorial representations of the constellations and the signs of the zodiac. Each of these is inscribed with its name according to the system of Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi (903–86). One of the greatest Muslim astronomers, he wrote a book entitled *The Book of Fixed Stars* in which he gave a complete description of each constellation, drawing on his own insights as well as those of Ptolemy and the Arabs of the desert.

70 Two Astronomical Quadrants

◄ a. Turkey, 19th century
Lacquered wood
Radius: 14.8 cm

b. Morocco, 19th century
Brass
Radius: 15.8 cm

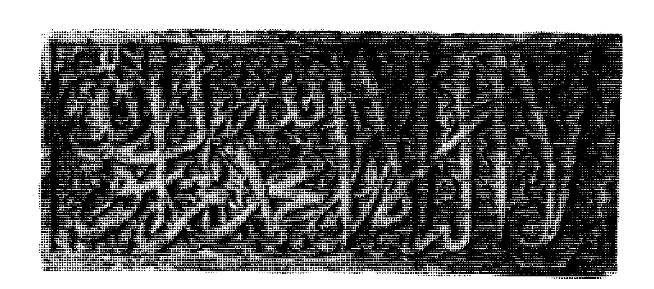
The quadrant, a simplified version of the astrolabe, was developed in the 11th-12th century in Egypt. Generally made of metal, they were occasionally executed in wood like the Turkish example here and, more rarely, carved in ivory. With a quadrant, one could tell time, solve trigonometry problems and undertake basic astronomical calculations for a single location. (a) is set for the latitude of Istanbul while (b) is set for the latitude of Fez.

◄ 71 Qibla Indicator

Turkey, circa 1800
Paper on wood, painted and lacquered
Size: 12.4 cm × 7.8 cm

A compass is set into the upper side, which is designed as a sun-dial with an articulated brass needle, and there is a 90° scale with a brass pointer to the top right. On the reverse is a gazetteer for 96 cities.

Architectural Decoration







◄ 72 Panel with Carved Inscription

Egypt, early 13th century
White marble
Height: 24.2 cm
Length: 57.8 cm

Inscriptions: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet"

During the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, monuments were often enhanced with panels of stucco, ivory, glass, wood and costly stone. Carved or inlaid with geometric, floral or epigraphic motifs, such panels provided visual accents on doors, walls and windows and could be incorporated into minbars, mihrabs and other furnishings.

This example, carved in white marble, may be compared with pieces executed in other materials in which a phrase of monumental calligraphy is set against a background of spiralling vines. The wood carvings of the Mausoleum of Sayyida Nafisa in Cairo are particularly close in style (eg. Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no.1655; G. Wiet, *Album du Musée Arabe du Caire*, Cairo, 1930, p.29). No other comparable piece in marble is recorded.

◄ 73 Inlaid Panel

Egypt, 14th century
Mosaic of glazed faience, marble and stone
Size: 49 cm square

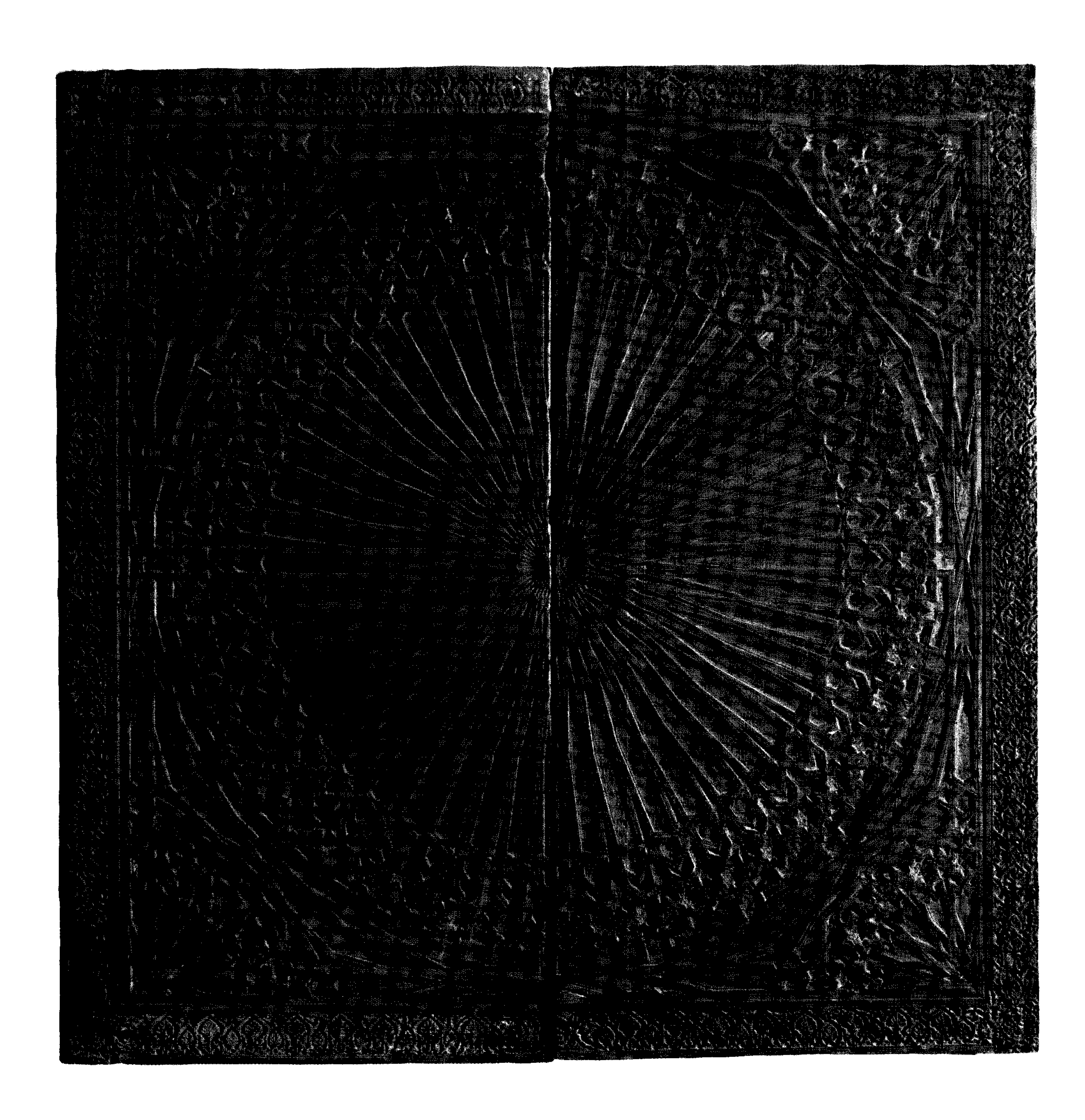
This panel consists of an inscription in square Kufic framed with a broadly conceived meander pattern. The calligraphy is executed in glazed faience of red, light blue and pale green, while the background is composed of white marble sections. The border is made up of different colored stones. There is a similar panel in the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania.

74 Fountain Head

Egypt, 14th century
Green onyx
Size: 55 cm × 48 cm

The fountain head has eight spouts in the form of rosettes, each on a fluted column around a domed octagon with another spout in the center. The roof of the dome is pierced and carved with four lotus flowers, each framed by a split palmette. The octagon stands on a square base with a spout in each corner and a recessed lip to the front.

The base would have originally stood on four legs in the center of a large fountain. It probably originally came from a Mamluk palace in Cairo, and is similar to another example in the Museum of Islamic Art (no.4568; see G. Wiet, *Album du Musée Arabe du Caire*, Cairo, 1930, pl.14).



◄ 75 Pair of Doors

Morocco, 14th–15th century
Carved Atlas pine wood
Size: 2 m square

These doors are made of pieces of Atlas pine, assembled with various joinery techniques and then carved. They were originally the upper portion of a large double door more than four and a half meters high, which must have graced an important palace or religious building. (see M. Jenkins, *Islamic Art in the Kuwait Museum: The al-Sabah Collection*, London, 1983, p.109, no. LNS 52 Wab.)

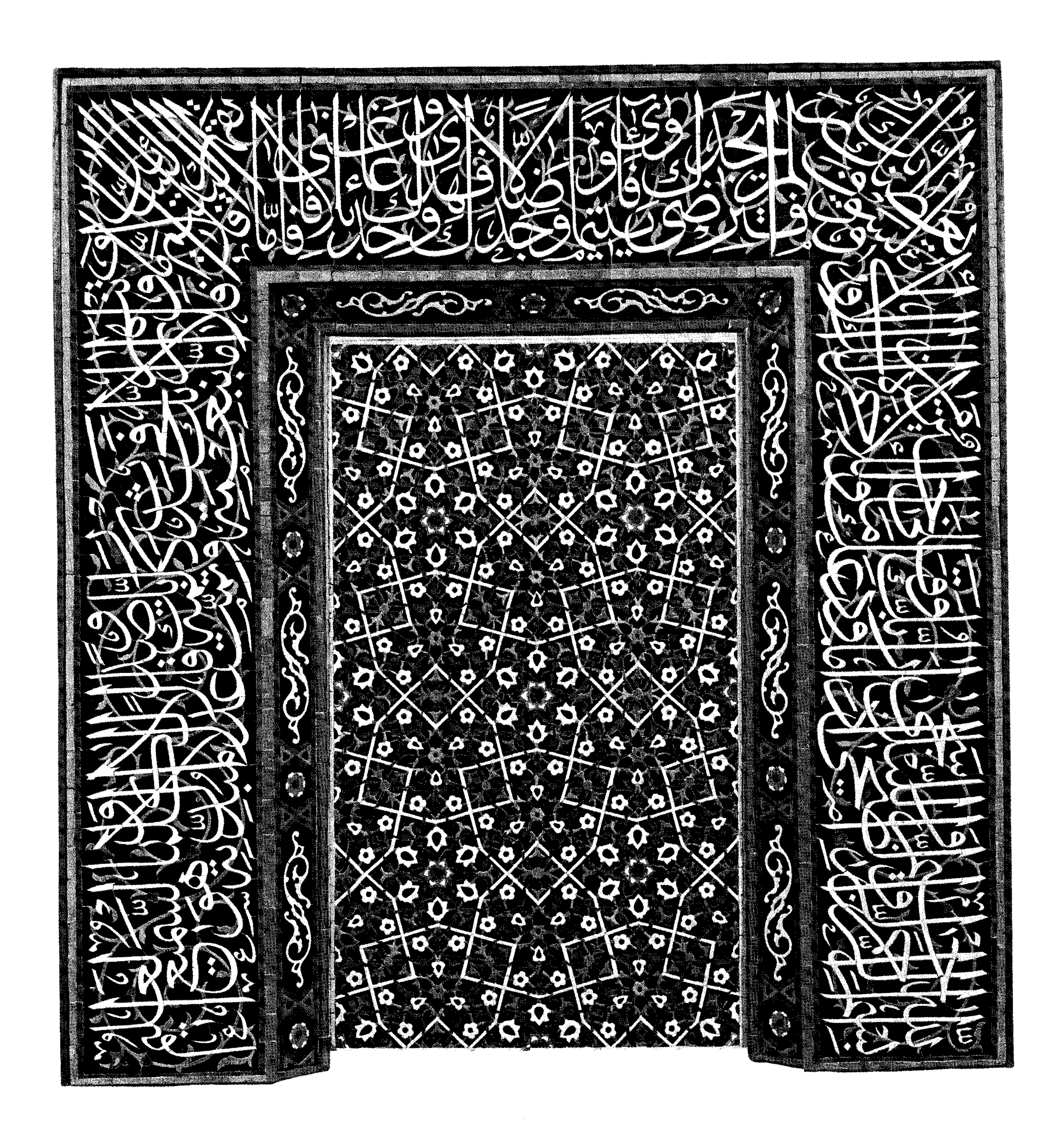
The monumentality achieved in the design of these doors is peculiar to the Maghrib and remains unmatched elsewhere in the Islamic world. From the center, a 48-point star expands across the entire surface of the Doors, generating a complex radial geometry. Smaller stars of the same format appear in the corners. The border consists of large and small palmettes, in curving frames, the forms of which contrast pleasantly with the straight lines of the central design.

76 Bar from a Window Grill

Inscribed with the titles of Sultan Qaitbay

Syria or Egypt, 15th century
Length: 132.5 cm

Inscription on the two central joints: "Glory to our Master, the Sultan, the King, Qaitbay, may his victory be glorious." Qaitbay, the ruler of Egypt and Syria, reigned between 1468 and 1498.



◄ 77 Mihrab

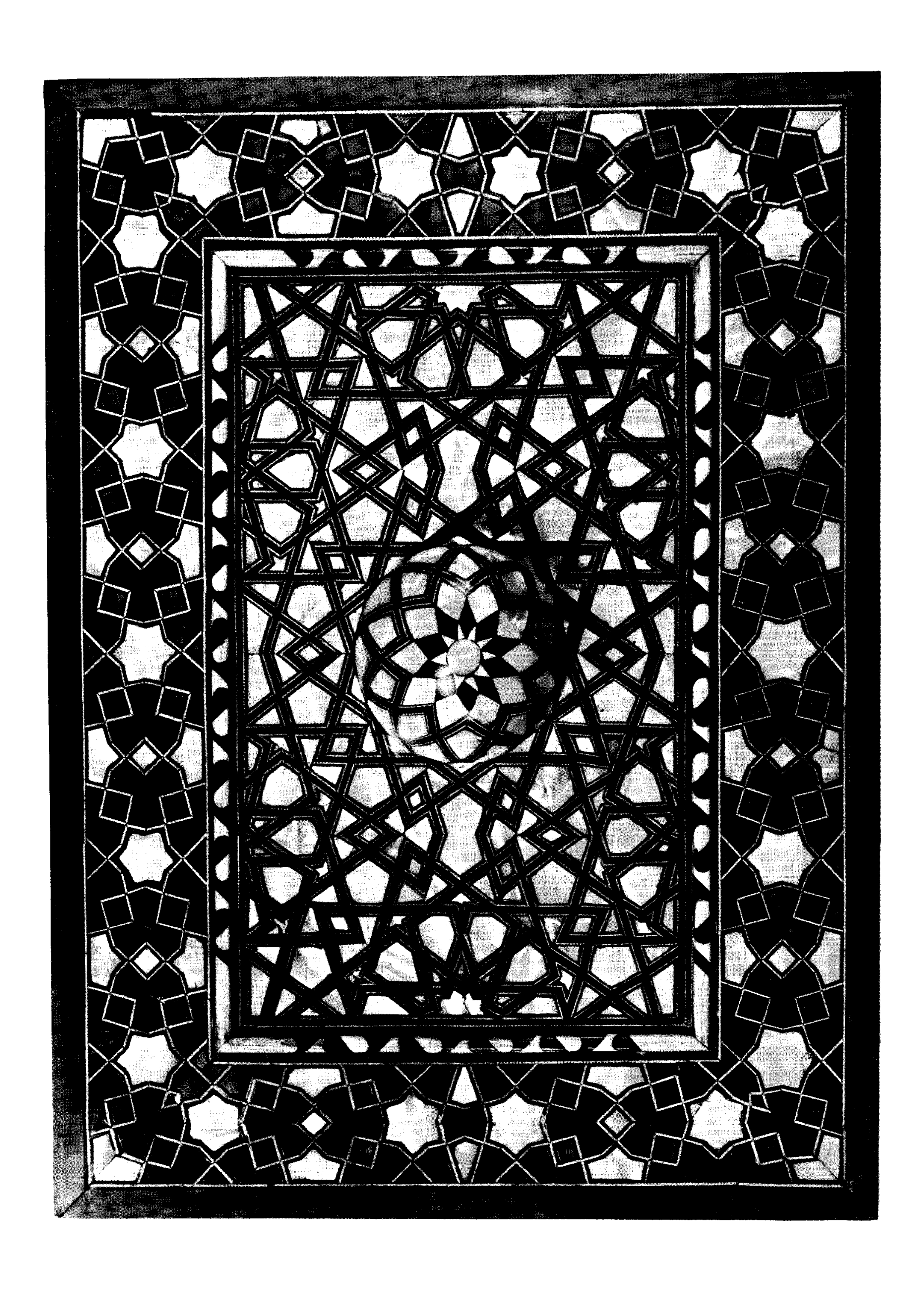
Iran, second half of 15th century
Glazed ceramic mosaic
Height: 171 cm
Width: 161 cm

Inscriptions: Qur'an Sura XCIII (complete) and Sura VI, v.116

The central panel has a geometric design set on a black ground of white interlocking irregular hexagons interwoven with two systems of floral arabesques, one in brown and the other in turquoise, with flowers in white and green. The dark blue border has a magnificent white Thuluth inscription set against a turquoise scrolling vine with small brown flowers. Some letters have olive-green infill. The recessed band has black cartouches with a white arabesque motif between turquoise and brown edges.

Glazed ceramic pieces were first used to adorn architecture in the 12th century in Iran. The technique was developed to such a point that in the 14th and 15th centuries craftsmen were capable of covering large areas, and Mihrabs such as this were characteristic of many of the major mosques built at this time. In the 16th century, the less exacting method of painting designs on large tiles gradually supplanted the mosaic technique. It required the most extraordinary precision in cutting the glazed ceramic to render an inscription of the type on this Mihrab, where every piece is a different shape, and where the whole effect depends on the accuracy of line. Even in the central panel, which is relatively more straightforward, there are three superimposed designs.

The Mihrab was originally in the winter-hall of one of the mosques in Isfahan that was demolished in the course of the urban re-development of the city in about 1930. The main Mihrab from the same mosque is now in the new mosque at King Abdul Aziz Airport, Jeddah. Besides these, three other Mihrabs were rescued. One is now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1939 – 39.20; exhibited at the Persian Exhibition, London, 1931) and another is in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio (Gift of Mrs. Katharine Holden Thayer, 62.23).



◄ 78 Inlaid Panel

Egypt, second half 16th century
Wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, ivory, ebony, bone, tortoiseshell and gold leaf
Height: 66.5 cm
Width: 49 cm

This exquisite inlaid panel was executed by craftsmen working in Cairo at the behest of the Ottoman sultan. A label on the reverse states that it was one of the two removed from the octagonal kiosk of the Mosque of al-Azhar when it was dismantled in 1872. One was taken to Istanbul and sold to Monsieur Schefer, a renowned collector. The other was acquired by Baron des Michels, French minister in Egypt. After Monsieur Schefer's death in 1898, Baron des Michels bought the second panel, thus reuniting the pair.

The craftsmanship of this panel is remarkable. The central zone consists of a geometric trellis of wood outlined in ivory, the interstices of which are filled with mother-of-pearl. At the center, a domed boss stands in high relief. The border has a geometric pattern in tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl, framed by raised borders in ebony and bone. The tortoiseshell is set over thin sheets of gold leaf to enhance the color.

Provenance: Baron des Michels Collection.

Metalwork





◄ 79 Ewer

Syria or Iraq, late 7th/early 8th century
Brass or bronze
Height: 37.5 cm

Of pear-shaped form, this ewer stands on a high, sloping foot. There are two leaf-shaped flanges on opposite sides of the flattened rim, and a simple raised collar at the base of the neck. The handle has a stylized gazelle's head at the base and six pearl-shaped knobs half way up its length. It ends in a bold palmette finial, topped with another knob. The exterior of the ewer is covered with a golden brown patina.

A comparable ewer in the Hermitage in Leningrad, made by Abu Yazid in Basra, is dated 69 (689–90).

Provenance: Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection.

Published: Anthony Welch, *Collection of Islamic Art of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan*, Geneva, 1972, Metal III, no.3.

80 Ewer

Iran, 8th century
Brass or bronze
Height: 32 cm

The upper part of the pear-shaped body is decorated with horizontal ribbing and the lower part has rectangular panels, each enclosing an 'X' motif. The neck rises to a spout engraved with a vine pattern. The handle has a pomegranate-shaped knob, beading in the middle and a stylized gazelle head terminal.

Another ewer of very similar form, but with palmette decoration on the body, is in the al-Sabah Collection in the Kuwait National Museum (LNS84M; see M. Jenkins, *Islamic Art in The Kuwait National Museum:* London 1983, no.37). These ewers illustrate the transition between the Sasanian and early Islamic forms in Iran.



◄ 81 Polyhedral Sprinkler Flask

Iran or Afghanistan, 12th century
Brass or bronze
Height: 18 cm

The roughly spheroid body of this flask, bulging over a high flaring foot, is chamfered into four square faces and eight triangular faces. Each square face is engraved with a floral medallion at the center and an animal set in a rectangular cartouche along each side. The triangular panels are enhanced with a circle of vines. At each corner of the polyhedron there is a protruding socket set with a turquoise. The tall, slender neck retains the pierced lid of a sprinkler.

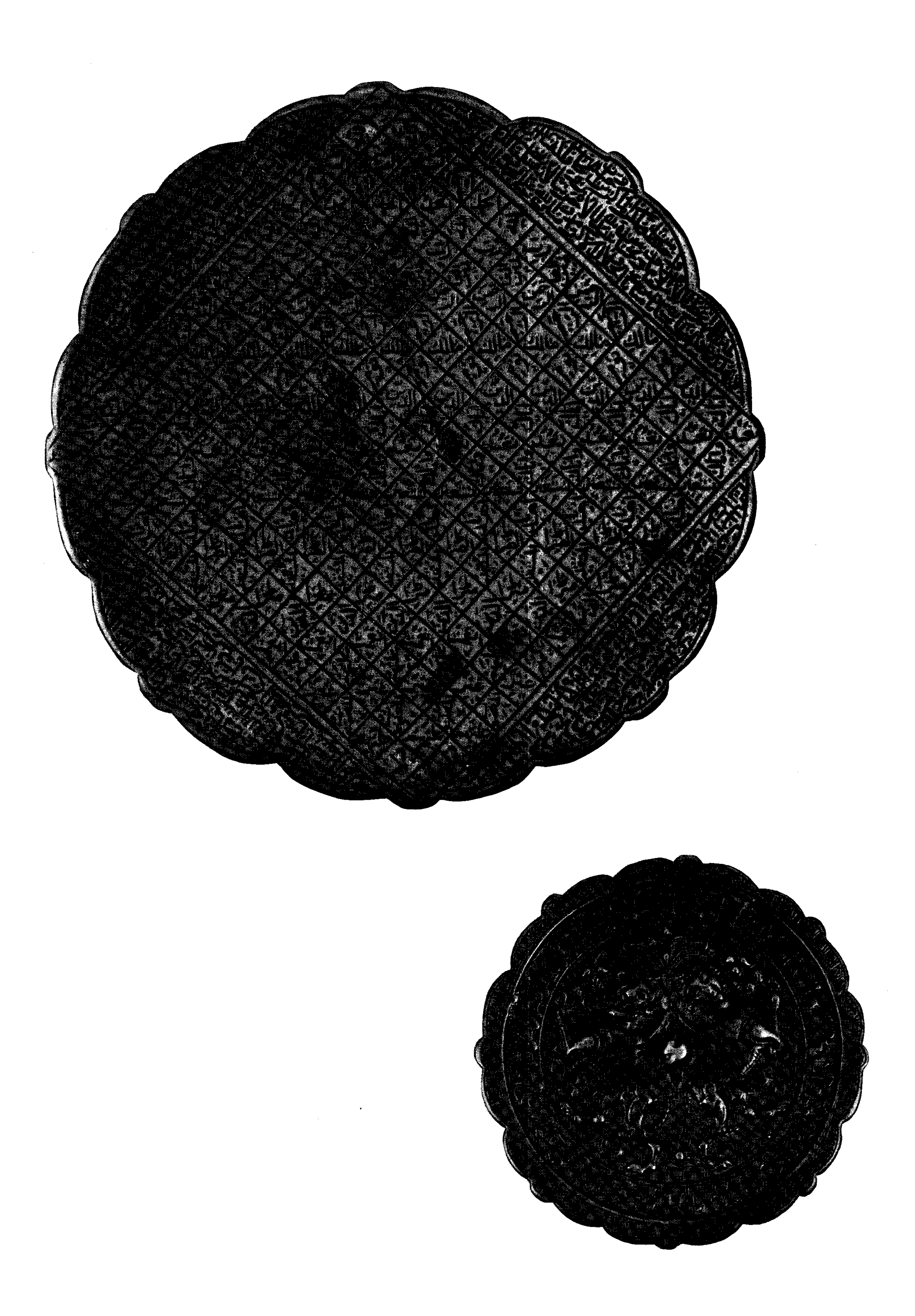
A similar flask is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no.777–1889; see A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World*, London, 1982, no.5). An example of identical shape made of blue-glazed pottery is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (no.1975.164).

◄ 82 Cat

Iran or Afghanistan, late 12th century
Brass or bronze
Height: 9 cm
Length: 17 cm

The cast bronze cat is decorated with two panels of calligraphy against scrolling vines on its back, and two roundels enclosing figures of peacocks on its haunches. The shoulders are defined with engraved arcades, and its chest and face are decorated with engraved palmettes.

Various animal figures, such as lions and birds, were made in bronze or brass. Some were intended as incense burners and were made with pierced designs, and others were intended as supports or finials. This figure of a cat seems to be an example of an animal sculpture intended as an ornament.



◄ 83 Mirror

Iran, 12th century
Brass or bronze
Diameter: 12.7 cm

The face is engraved with a square of 225 compartments. Each square is engraved with a word from the Surat al-Fatiha, starting at the apex, so that the whole Sura can be read in sequences following the sides of the square, while each word occupies an entire line across the diagonal. A prayer is repeated on each lobed section. The back is cast with two addorsed sphinxes within a Kufic border, and the outer border is engraved with prayers.

The engraving is probably somewhat later than the mirror itself, and is executed with great precision. (See *Art Islamique dans les Collections Privées Libanaises*, Beirut, 1974, no.143 for another engraved mirror).

84 Lamp

Iran, 12th century
Brass or bronze
Height: 18.5 cm

Inscriptions: *On rim*
"Good fortune and complete blessings"
Around body
Similar to above
On neck
Two rectangles with words "the work of"

This lamp is shaped like a vase with a broadly flaring rim. The body is pierced with an open-work inscription of bold Kufic, framed by cable pattern borders. Above the inscription and on opposite sides of the lamp are two pierced medallions, each containing a bird; between the medallions on each side is a pierced vertical panel of Kufic. Around the neck is a collar with a scrolling vine in relief, and around the inside of the rim is a bold, floriated Kufic inscription in voided relief against a stippled background. Calligraphy similar to that in the rim inscription can be seen on a lamp on the Louvre in Paris (A.O. no.7890, illustrated in *L'Islam dans les collections nationales*, Paris, 1977, pl.56).

Provenance: Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection

Published: Anthony Welch, *Collection of Islamic Art of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan*, Geneva, 1972, Metal, III, no.5.
Oleg Grabar, *Persian Art before and after the Mongol Conquest*, Ann Arbor, 1959, no.29.



◄ 85 Tray

Afghanistan, 12th century
Beaten brass or bronze engraved and inlaid with silver
Length: 32.5 cm
Width: 20.5 cm

Inscriptions: *Around the rim*
"Glory, prosperity, wealth, happiness, well-being,
Grace and entire?... and (God's) support and
health, sympathy
And... and sufficiency, honor and wealth.
Ease, mercy, long life and perpetual praise to its owners"
Inside the rim
"Good fortune, blessing, wealth and perpetual life to its owner"

The tray is of beaten copper alloy that is engraved and inlaid in silver. The lobed well includes a geometric roundel framed by two panels of Kufic calligraphy. Around the sides are four hunting hounds, arabesques and rosettes. The recessed spandrals are of floral arabesques, and the outer borders have Kufic punctuated by rosettes and palmettes.

Other examples are in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, (no.54.530, acquired from the Kelekian Collection, Paris, 1930) and in the Louvre, Paris, (MAO 498 and 499, acquired in 1976).

◄ 86 Ewer
Made by Tahir Ali

Iran or Afghanistan, 12th century
Brass inlaid with copper
Height: 35.5 cm

Inscriptions: *Neck*
"Blessings and well-being...good fortune"
Around the shoulder
"With good fortune and blessing and well-being and happiness and glory and prosperity"
Front of the body
"The work of Tahir Ali"

The ewer is unusually solidly made and the thick brass gives it unexpected weight. The Kufic inscriptions are inlaid in copper against stippled backgrounds on the neck, around the shoulder and along the top front edge of the body. Below this is a niche-shaped cartouche, enclosing two parrots among swirling plant forms, which is also inlaid with copper. The handle, upper neck and spout are inlaid and engraved, and the top of the spout is pierced like a filter.





◄ 87 Incense Globe

Iran or Afghanistan, circa 1200
Brass inlaid with silver
Diameter: 13.2 cm
Inscriptions: *On the circular band*

"Glory and prosperity and wealth and entirety and tranquility and inner-calm and contentment and gratefulness and happiness and well-being and health"

On the bands which make up the pentagram

"Glory and prosperity and wealth and inner-calm and glory and prosperity and entirety and gratefulness and tranquility and mercy and inner-calm and well-being and endurance and success and mercy and inner-calm and contentment and gratefulness and endurance and health and grace and tranquility and entirety"

The surface of the globe displays the twelve astrological signs, each sign enclosed in a pentagon. On one hemisphere the signs of Saturn in Aquarius, Mercury in Pisces, Venus in Libra, Mars in Scorpio, Planetary Eclipse in Sagittarius and Saturn in Capricorn are set within interlaced bands of calligraphy forming the pentagons. On the other hemisphere, the signs of Mars in Aries, Venus in Taurus, Mercury in Gemini, the Moon in Cancer, the Sun in Leo and Mercury in Virgo are set within interlacing bands of running animals. Each triangle encloses a small face. The decoration is entirely inlaid in silver, with engraved details on the astrological figures and animals.

This appears to be the only known spherical incense burner from the eastern Islamic world, although examples from Syria and Turkey are published. It fits the description of such objects given by the Arab traveler al-Biruni who stated that such globes were rolled between the guests after dinner. The gimballed support system inside prevented the coals and incense from spilling and a pleasant aroma could be disseminated unobtrusively.



◄ 88 Tray

Afghanistan, 13th century
Copper
Diameter: 74.5 cm

Inscriptions: *Cursive*
"Glory, success, prosperity, grace, of God, splendor, excellence, generosity, forbearance, nobility, forbearance, modesty, mercy, generosity to God, virtuous..."
Kufic
Repetition of the word 'glory.'

There are twelve medallions around the rim, eight of which contain signs of the zodiac, and the other four with geometric and floral designs. Between the medallions are four panels of knotted Kufic calligraphy, four of tall cursive calligraphy, and four of floral arabesque patterns. The form and size of this tray make it most unusual, and it benefits from a wonderful green and red patina.

Very few pure copper vessels seem to have survived from the early Islamic period compared to those made of alloys such as bronze and brass. This indicates that copper was an expensive commodity, and was also difficult to cast. This tray and the following cauldron suggest that there was a workshop specializing in copper casting, probably in western Afghanistan (see J. W. Allan, *Persian Metal Technology, 700–1300 AD*, Oxford, 1979, p.39).

◄ 89 Cauldron

Afghanistan, early 13th century
Copper
Height: 46 cm

This cauldron was probably made for cooking purposes in a religious or charitable institution which fed pilgrims and poor people on a regular basis. Its basic design is enhanced by tasteful engraved decoration. The shoulder of the vessel shows an inscription invoking a variety of good wishes. Below this a band of inverted cresting contains a winged animal in each panel against a background of flowering vines. The neck is decorated with a series of drop-shaped medallions, each containing a bird, and the handle is engraved with scrolling vines.



◄ 90 Ewer

Iraq, circa 1230
Beaten brass inlaid with silver
Height: 33.5 cm

Inscription: "Perpetual glory and long-life and noblemindedness and fortune and prosperity to the favorite of Kings and Sultans Bajawa (?)"

Around the upper body of the ewer are two medallions, each showing a mounted prince hunting with a falcon and four cartouches of calligraphy set against a background of geometric design. On the lower body are twelve arches, each enclosing a figure. At the front and back are the figures of seated princes who are accompanied in the other arches by musicians, cup bearers, arms bearers, a falconer and a poet holding a flower. A band of Kufic decorates the lower neck, with floral arabesques on the lobed shoulder and around the foot. The handle, spout and upper neck are restored. This ewer was quite possibly made in Mosul, Iraq, which became one of the main centers for inlaid metalwork in the first half of the 13th century. The technique of inlaying silver into brass seems to have been transferred from Herat to Mosul and from there spread further to Syria and to Egypt. Due to the diplomatic skills and political foresight of Badr al-Din Lulu, who ruled Mosul in 1218–59, the city escaped destruction by the Mongols and remained an active cultural and commercial center. We owe our knowledge of the metalwork of this period to the survival of various pieces, including five made for Badr al- Din himself; the so called Blacas ewer in the British Museum signed by Shuja ibn Mana and dated 629 (1232); and the various pieces signed by Mosul artists, particularly Ahmad bin Omar al-Dhaki, Ibrahim bin Mawaliya and Ismail bin Ward. (See D. S. Rice, "The Brasses of Badr al-Din Lulu," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol.13, no.3, 1950, pp.627–34; and "Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Ahmad al-Dhaki al-Mawsili," *Ars Orientalis*, vol.2, 1957, pp.283–326.)

Although almost no silver remains on the decoration of this ewer, it is nevertheless possible to see why the metal workers of Mosul attained such renown. The figures in the arches are particularly well defined, and the craftsman has managed to depict the figure of a poet reciting poetry so clearly that there is no doubt as to what he represents – not an easy task even conceptually. There are two related ewers in the Museum for Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul (one of which is dated 627 (1229), no.217), and another was previously in the collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan (see Anthony Welch, *The Collection of Islamic Art of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan*, Geneva, 1972).



91 Candlestick

Iraq or Syria, circa 1300
Bronze or brass inlaid with silver
Height: 15.5 cm
Inscriptions: "Perpetual glory, healthy life, increasing prosperity, authoritative commands, all things good."

Candlesticks of this basic shape, frequently depicted in manuscript painting, vary considerably in the details of their profiles and ornamentation. This example shows a marked inward curve in the body and its inlaid silver motifs are both figural and epigraphic.

The small circular medallions around the body show two seated flute players and two seated princes. These medallions are linked by an inscription band with triangular decorative panels above and below. Around the shoulder, the stylized Kufic motif is inlaid with silver.

◄ 92 Candlestick

Iraq or western Iran, second half 14th century
Brass or bronze inlaid with silver
Height: 26.5 cm

Inscriptions: "Glory and victory and prosperity and splendour and grace and generosity and honor and goodwill to its owner, the just"

The proportions of this cast metal candlestick are particularly well-defined. This refinement is reflected in the elegant calligraphy around the body. The calligraphy is inlaid with silver and set against a background of spiralling vines. The inscription is interrupted by three circular medallions showing two mounted falconers and a polo player. The details of the figural subjects are finely engraved on the silver. Above and below this band is a border of inlaid vine pattern. The rim and the base of the candlestick pan are inlaid with a Kufic inscription framed by a vine pattern. Three figures of musicians within circular medallions decorate the upper part of the stem, with floral arabesques between them. A Kufic motif runs around the holder.

This type of candlestick was probably made either in Baghdad or Tabriz under the Jalairid dynasty, which succeeded to the territories of the Ilkhans in Iraq and Azerbaijan between 1336 and 1432.



◄ 93 Bowl

Syria or Egypt, mid 14th century
Brass inlaid with silver
Height: 8.3 cm
Diameter: 17.5 cm

Inscriptions: "Glory, permanent prosperity and long life to you, the lordly, the elevated, the splendid, the extended good luck, Khalid the Noble"

This bowl conforms in shape and design with many bowls made during the Mamluk era. A Thuluth inscription, incised and inlaid with silver, encircles the bowl on the exterior. It is set against a scrolling vine and interrupted by six medallions of flying birds. The underside is engraved with a lobed medallion of foliate forms, while the interior shows fish swimming around a disc. Such an illusionistic design suggests that the bowl may have been used to hold water or other transparent liquid.

◄ 94 Plate

Made for Amir Abrak al-Ashrafi
Syria, circa 1500–09
Tinned copper
Diameter: 36 cm

Inscriptions: *Central medallion*

"One of the objects made for the honorable authority, the lofty, the lordly, the . . ., the great, the masterly"

On the back

"One of the objects was made for the Amir Abrak al-Ashrafi, the Deputy of the Victorious Citadel of Aleppo, may God glorify its victories"

Inscriptions of subsequent owners:

"For al-Hajji Badr al-Din, son of al-Sibitari. Its owner Mawdisi Arud Salman Bek"

The Amir Abrak al-Ashrafi was appointed Governor of the strategically important city of Aleppo by the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Qansuh al-Ghuri, who was killed at the decisive battle at Marj Dabiq near Aleppo in 1516, giving the Ottoman Sultan, Selim I, control of Syria and Egypt. The composite coat of arms in the center appears to have been used by several Mamluk amirs and is found on other examples of metalwork (see L. A. Mayer, *Saracenic Heraldry*, Oxford, 1933, pls.62 and 68). The engraved decoration, highlighted by black bituminous paste applied to the background, is typical of the late Mamluk period. At that time, economic depression and a shortage of silver caused artists to seek more economical materials. By applying a thin coating of tin over a densely-engraved copper vessel, they could approximate the opulence of 14th-century objects and create a distinctive piece of considerable aesthetic appeal.





◄ 95 Two Stem Bowls

Italy, late 15th–early 16th century
Bronze, gilded
a. Height: 12.2 cm
Diameter: 16.2 cm
b. Height: 12.2 cm
Diameter: 15 cm

The bowls are both of cylindrical form standing on a tall flared foot. Around the outside of each vessel, a geometric trellis is inlaid in silver, enclosing panels engraved with scrolling floral and arabesque patterns. The feet, possibly slightly later additions, are engraved with interlocking lobed cartouches of arabesque foliage.

A number of Muslim craftsmen found refuge in Venice from the ravages inflicted by Timur's invasion of Syria in the early 15th century. Their work was appreciated for its quality as well as its exotic nature, and their workshops seem to have flourished throughout the 15th and early 16th centuries. It is interesting to see how being implanted in foreign soil has affected the nature of their designs. On these bowls, the arabesques no longer link up into an organic whole, but are reserved into separate compartments. The vines have been trained to a European sense of surface pattern.

Published: *Objects for a 'Wunderkammer'*, ed. A. Gonzalez-Palacios and L. D'Urso, Colnaghi, London, 1981, nos.33a–b.





◄ 96 Two Openwork Plaques

Iran, circa 1576
Steel
Length: 38.8 cm
Width: 13.5 cm

According to Sir Charles Marling, these two plaques, and a third which he donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1919 (see *The Arts of Islam*, London, 1976, no.234), came from the shrine in Shiraz of Shah Tahmasp, second of the Safavid Shahs of Iran, who died in 1576.

While the precise significance of the inscriptions awaits further research, the bold silhouette of calligraphic forms against the delicate floral vine is of undeniable beauty.

Steel, generally the material of arms and armor, reached a peak of decorative perfection under the Safavids in the 16th and 17th centuries. In addition to other plaques of this style, a magnificent Kashkul made by Hajji Abbas in 1606–07 may be noted (see J. W. Allan, *Islamic Metalwork: the Nuhad Es-Said Collection*, London, 1982, no.26).

Provenance: Sir Charles Marling

Exhibited: Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1916–19, Royal Academy of Arts, London, International Exhibition of Persian Art, 1931

Published: *Catalogue of the International Exhibition of Persian Art*, 1931, p.197, case 317.



◄ 97 Basin

Saudi Arabia, circa 1600
Brass
Diameter: 30 cm

Inscriptions: *On the rim*
"Its owner Mullah Ahmad"
Under the rim
"For the possession of Husayn Agha Husayni, the envoy of Abdullah Khan the Uzbek, from ..... the sacred enclosure (at Makkah?) the work of Piruz in Jeddah"

The inscription, which appears to be contemporary with the basin, indicates that it was made in the Hijaz, perhaps for a party of pilgrims. Its decoration suggests that the metalworker was trained in the Iranian tradition. This is corroborated by manuscript evidence, for there was apparently a group of artists that worked in the Safavid and Ottoman styles living in Makkah and Medina in the 16th and 17th centuries.

◄ 98 Basin

Iran or Afghanistan, late 16th century
Brass
Diameter: 36.8 cm

This basin is an elegant example of cast and turned brass. Great care has been taken with the proportions of the slightly inverting sides, the curved rim and the precise contours of the outer edge. The design at the center of the interior surface is comparable to the "star" medallions found at the beginning of contemporary manuscripts. The contrast of this minimal but exquisite decoration with the smooth contours of refined form are the source of the basin's beauty. An almost identical example is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no.738–1894).

◄ 99 Kashkul

Iran, circa 1600
Brass
Maximum length: 60 cm

This Kashkul, or beggar's bowl, is boat-shaped and terminates in dragon heads with movable tongues. Around the exterior rim, the Persian inscription is engraved in a series of cartouches. Below this, there are two registers of lobed medallions divided by palmette borders. The interior surface of the vessel is engraved with cartouches, medallions and fish. The chain is original.



◄ 100 Helmet

Turkey, second half 15th century
Steel with silver decoration
Height: 31 cm
Diameter: 24 cm

Inscriptions: "Glory is in worshipping God/Muhammad/wealth is in contentment/Muhammad/....../Muhammad"

This helmet is designed to be worn over a turban and retains the fittings for other battle accoutrements. Supplementary chain mail could be attached to the loops around the lower edge and a nose guard could be fastened to the bracket above the eye holes.

Around the upper part of the helmet, three lobed medallions enclosing calligraphy are linked by an interlaced frame of silver knotting. An inscription runs around the lower part, punctuated by three panels enclosing the name of Muhammad. The binding over the eye holes and around the lower edge has silver decoration. An arsenal mark is still visible, engraved on the ribbed middle portion just to the left of the hook. It shows that the helmet was kept in the main Ottoman arsenal in the Byzantine basilica of St. Irene, inside the entrance to the Topkapi Palace.

101 Two Flasks

a. Turkey, second half 16th century
Copper, mercury gilded
Height: 28 cm

b. Turkey, 17th century
Leather embroidered with silver thread
Height: 28 cm

The engraved decoration of tulips, carnations, cypress trees, arabesque medallions and cable-pattern borders is typical of Ottoman design of the period and particularly close in style to the decoration found on Iznik pottery. The shape of the flask is obviously derived from leather, as illustrated by flask b.

Another example, which has largely lost its gilding, is in the Louvre, Paris (K. 3442, Legs Koechlin, 1932) and was exhibited in November 1983, at the Palais de Tokyo.



◄ 102 Sword Pommel

Made for Amir Abu'l-Ghanaim Mansur bi-Allah

Iran, 12th century
Silver with niello and gilding
Height: 5 cm
Width: 4 cm

The wide band around the circumference of the pommel consists of a fine floriated Kufic inscription executed in niello on a minutely-stippled field. At the peak of the dome, a small raised boss is surrounded by curling vines in niello on a gilded background. The pierced stem of the pommel is designed to be fixed securely over the head of a sword.

◄ 103 Sword

Made by al-Hajji Sunqur

Turkey, 957 AH/1550 AD
Steel inlaid with gold; horn; brass
Length: 97 cm

The watered steel blade is enhanced with various inscriptions inlaid in gold. Three raised medallions contain invocations in Kufic, between which are the signature of the craftsman, the date and another invocation. Along the top of the blade, the word 'Buduh' appears three times.

◄ 104 Sword

Made by Maksud

India, 1087 AH/1676 AD
Steel inlaid with gold; iron overlaid with gold; walrus ivory
Length: 95 cm

The finely-watered steel blade is inlaid in gold at its base with four cartouches of Nastaliq calligraphy containing a poem dedicated to the Caliph Ali. Between the cartouches are invocations to God, written within a divided square.

105 Bow

Made by Muhiddin

Turkey, 990 AH/1582 AD
Horn, lacquered wood
Length of outer curve: 114 cm

This bow was made by Muhiddin, one of the most highly regarded bow-makers of the time. His talents are evident in the precise craftsmanship of every ridge and angle in this piece.

Ceramics





◄ 106 Bowl

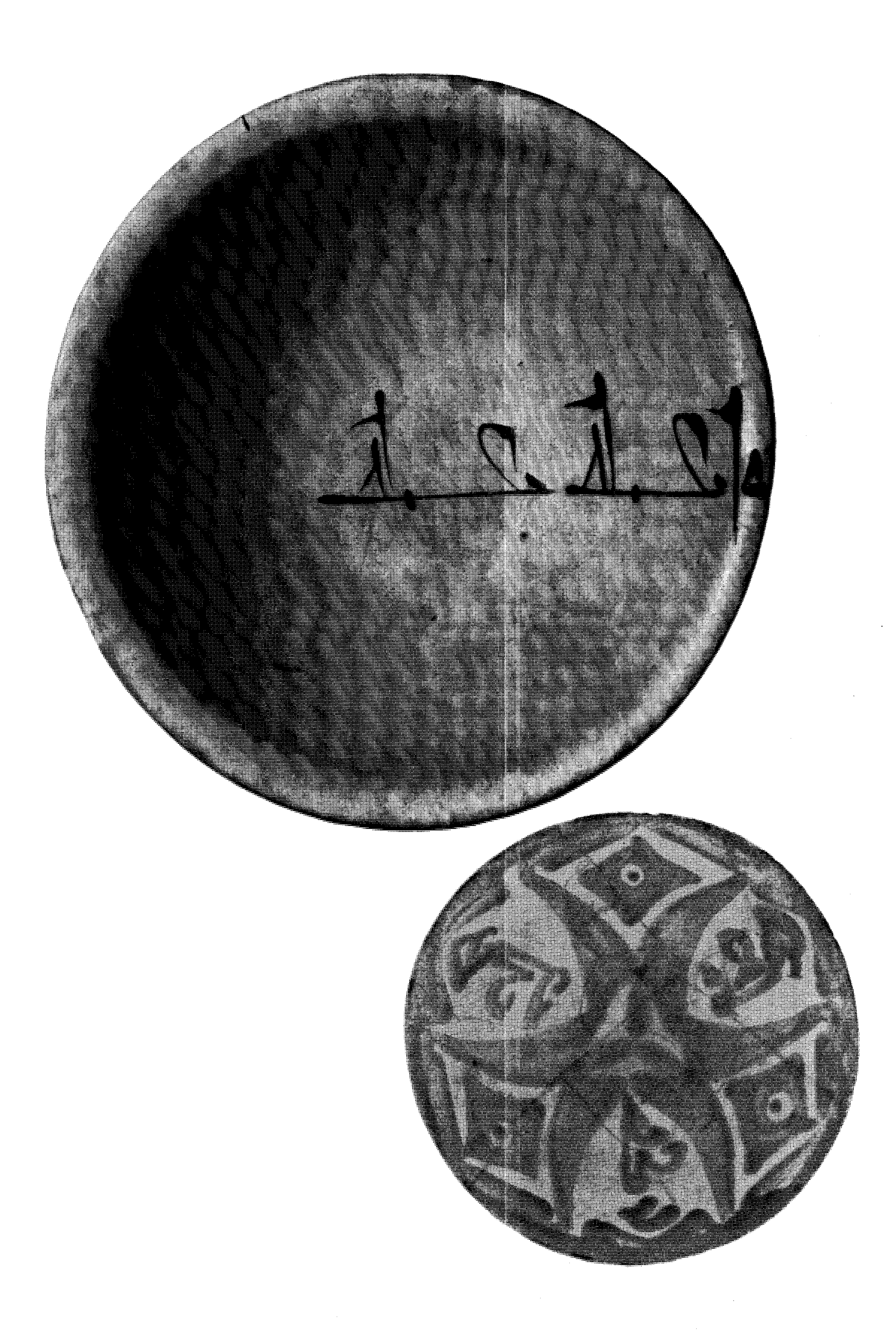
Iraq, 9th century
Ceramic; white glaze overpainted in blue and green
Diameter: 25.2 cm

The shallow bowl has an everted rim and stands on a low foot. Inside, it is painted with a revolving design of calligraphic fronds around a central star in cobalt-blue and copper-green. The rim has rounded lappets, alternately blue and green.

This type of bowl typifies one of many manifestations of the long-standing Islamic admiration for Chinese art. Excavations in the area have revealed Far Eastern pottery juxtaposed with local Islamic wares, elucidating the similarities and differences. In this case, the potters added tin oxide to clear glaze in order to produce an opaque surface. Imitating in this way the quality of T'ang Dynasty porcelain, Muslim potters developed their own style of decoration in soft colors. While there are other examples of this type, this bowl is outstanding in its balanced beauty.

Published: R. Pinder-Wilson, "The Variety of Islamic Pottery," *Apollo*, vol. 90, 1969, pp. 289–303.
Islamic Pottery, 800–1400 AD, London, 1969, no II.
A. Caiger-Smith, *Tin Glaze Pottery in Europe and the Islamic World*, London, 1973, p.299, fig.1.

Exhibited: "Islamic Pottery 800–1400 AD," exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, October–November, 1969.



◄ 107 Bowl

Iraq, 9th century
Ceramic; white glaze overpainted in blue
Diameter: 22 cm

Inscriptions: "Whatever is made is made"

While much of Islamic art may be characterized by dense overall patterns, certain ceramic styles are strikingly economical in their designs. The surface of this shallow bowl is decorated with a single line of Kufic painted in cobalt blue. The positioning of the inscription and the deftness of its execution are most unusual and perhaps should be compared to Chinese models. The content of the inscription is not unlike similarly proverbial phrases found on other ceramic pieces.

◄ 108 Bowl

Iraq, 9th century
Ceramic; overpainted in luster
Diameter: 13.5 cm

This bowl is painted in honey-colored luster with a central star, between the points of which are alternately a word written in Kufic and a diamond-shaped panel. There are Kufic-like motifs on the exterior surfaces as well.

The origins of luster are controversial, but it seems likely that this technical innovation was developed in Iraq. The process involved painting a design in metallic oxides (e.g. sulphur, silver-oxide and copper-oxide) on a glazed and fired object. The piece was then subjected to a second firing, which fixed the design as a sheen on the surface of the vessel. Their seemingly costly appearance made such wares very popular, and examples are known from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Spain.



◄ 109 Jar

Egypt, 10th–11th century
Ceramic; overpainted in luster
Height: 29 cm

Inscriptions: *In the cartouches around the body*
"Blessing and perfect and complete and complete and"
Round the base
"A perfect complete blessing perfect complete perfect complete"

This jar appears to be the only surviving example of this type that is intact, although other examples of the decorative style are known. Its decoration consists of two main components – knotting or braiding cables and Kufic calligraphy. Variations of the first are used as borders and as the trellis around the upper part of the body. A band of floriated Kufic calligraphy encircles the lower part, and epigraphic motifs appear in the medallions defined by the trellis above. The inscriptions are formulaic good wishes. The technique of decorating pottery in luster was probably introduced into Egypt from Iraq in the late 10th century. Glassmakers in Egypt had been using luster as early as the 8th century.



◄ 110 Bowl

Syria, circa 1200
Ceramic; colorless glaze over blue and black design
Diameter: 26 cm

This bowl is a beautiful example of a ceramic technique developed in the 12th century – underglaze painting. The design, executed in blue and black, is covered by a transparent alkaline glaze. It consists of a light blue inscription running across the middle of the bowl within a panel of black dots; this calligraphic band spans the broadest portion of a lobed zone of white, bracketed at the corners with panels of black stippling, and bisected by a pair of linked fleur-de-lys. The flattened rim is articulated with black spots. Many objects in this style are attributed to Raqqa, an important pottery-producing center at this time. The city probably benefited from an influx of craftsmen from Egypt after the fall of the Fatimid dynasty in 1171.

111 Bowl

Syria, circa 1200
Ceramic; turquoise glaze over black design.
Diameter: 27 cm

While some of the underglaze-painted wares associated with Syria at this time exhibit a clear alkaline glaze, this bowl is remarkable for the intensity of its turquoise glaze. It contrasts with the black underglaze paint used to define the rings of the concentric design and to provide the ground for palmettes, vines and calligraphy left in reserve.

112 Lamp

Syria, 12th century
Ceramic; overpainted in luster
Height: 18 cm

This lamp was very well designed. Apparently the oil was put in the spout at the back and flowed around the hollow center to the two projecting spouts. Since the glaze has become highly iridescent, most of the design is obscured. Remnants of an inscription can be seen, however, around the flat vertical surface below the pierced domical top. Very little remains on the high cylindrical foot.



◄ 113 Cow and Calf

Syria, first half 13th century
Ceramic; turquoise glaze over blue and black design
Size of base: 21 cm × 11.8 cm
Height: 20.5 cm

This rare figural group shows a cow being milked by a cowherd who holds a pail at his knees. A calf stands in front of the cow and both animals are tethered to a peg. Of particular fascination is the fact that the cowherd is a distinctly Mongol type, with his hair tied in a pigtail and wearing the typical conical hat with baggy trousers. Mongol tribesmen became an increasingly familiar sight in Syria in the early 13th century and presumably this piece was made before the sack of Raqqa by the Mongols in 1259.

The figures stand on a flat base, and are decorated in black and cobalt blue beneath a turquoise glaze. No other comparable group is known. It was originally found along with another single figure of a bull, which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (inv. no. 36,1980).



◄ 114 Bowl

Iran or Central Asia, 10th century
Ceramic; colorless glaze over slip-painted design
Diameter: 33.5 cm

Inscriptions: "Wealth is to be spent not accumulated and beauty is to impress, not to frighten, so it is said."

The potters active under the Samanid dynasty in Nishapur and Samarqand discovered that by adding color to clay slip they could prevent it from running when the lead glaze was fired. This realization enabled them to render precise designs such as the calligraphy on this bowl. Its great beauty results from the economical contrast of black and white and the astonishing exactitude with which the letters were painted. Like other examples of this type, the inscription is proverbial rather than poetic. On another bowl in the Louvre, is written "Knowledge, the taste of which is bitter at first, is later sweeter than honey" (see *L'Islam dans les collections nationales*, Paris, 1977, no.86).

115 Bowl

Iran or Central Asia, 10th century
Ceramic; colorless glaze over slip-painted design
Diameter: 40.5 cm

The interior is painted in black under a lead glaze with a design of six, robed figures standing with their arms outstretched. They are holding one side of a palmette wreath in each hand and are apparently engaged in a dance around the central figures of an ibex and a cockerel. The figures have long hair, decorated with flowers, and the skirts of their robes are alternately decorated with dots and with a diamond-pattern. Small floral ornaments are scattered on the field. The outside rim has a diamond-motif between bars.

This style of figural decoration was probably influenced by contemporary manuscript illustration, of which, unfortunately, no examples are known to have survived. Another large bowl with four seated figures of similar type is in the Cleveland Museum of Art (J. H. Wade Fund 59.249; see cover illustration, *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 47, no.3, March 1960).



◄ 116 Bowl

Iran or Central Asia, 10th century
Ceramic; colorless glaze over slip-painted design
Diameter: 24 cm

Slip-painted designs could be executed in more than one color and enhanced with fine, incised lines. At the center of this bowl is a floral interlace; on its sloping interior sides, red leaves alternating with bands of pseudo-Kufic are framed by brown leaves. Throughout, fine white lines define the details of leaf and floral form and overlapping interlace elements. The exterior rim is decorated with a brown cable pattern.

◄ 117 Bowl

Iran or Central Asia, 10th century
Ceramic; colorless glaze over slip-painted design
Diameter: 21.8 cm

Samanid slip-painted wares exhibit a relatively restricted range of colors and wider variety of designs. Here, the interior of the bowl is decorated with a repeated motif of two brown discs and a red 'tongue', converging on the center. The rim is festooned with brown lappets.

A slightly larger version of this bowl, with an identical design, was excavated in Nishapur, Iran (see A. Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, London, 1965, fig.16B), suggesting a similar provenance for this piece.



◄ 118 Bowl

Iran, 10th-11th century
Ceramic; color over design incised in white slip
Diameter: 36.5 cm

The surface of the bowl is incised with a revolving design of curled tendrils and scale-pattern and splashed with running glazes of green, yellow and manganese-brown. This style of decoration first made its appearance in the Islamic world in Samarra in the 9th century and is so strongly reminiscent of the Chinese T'ang Dynasty splashware of a century earlier that one can only suppose that some of the Chinese wares reached Iraq and Iran at this time.

◄ 119 Bowl

Iran, 12th century
Ceramic; color over design incised in white slip
Diameter: 26.3 cm

The design of a bird perched on a branch is incised and filled in with yellow, green and manganese glazes, with the lines of the drawing serving to prevent the glazes running into each other. The pottery is thick and heavy and of a type usually attributed to Arghand, a town near Tabriz. The bird is probably a falcon and can be found on another, larger bowl in the Keir Collection (see E. J. Grube, *Islamic Pottery in the Keir Collection*, London, 1976, no.70).

120 Bowl

Iran, 12th century
Ceramic; blue and colorless glaze over incised design
Diameter: 22.2 cm

This bowl reflects both a Chinese inspiration and a considerable technical advance for Muslim potters. By using a fine white paste instead of coarser earthenwares, they could more closely approximate the effect of Chinese porcelain. The carved decoration may also be compared with Sung Dynasty wares. It consists of a band of palmettes around the side of the bowl. Strokes of blue glaze provide minimal color accents.

Provenance: Baron Cassel van Dorm Collection
Olsen Collection



◄ 121 Pitcher

Iran, circa 1200
Ceramic; turquoise glaze over black design
Height: 31.5 cm

The elaborate and varied decoration is painted in black beneath a turquoise glaze. Large, multi-layered palmettes around the body are framed by two bands of poetry written in a flowing, cursive hand. Flying birds are reserved in a black band around the shoulder, and palmettes enclosed by leaves decorate the lower body. The rim is glazed in cobalt blue with a wide band of floriated Kufic below and a cursive inscription beneath it.

This pitcher was among a number of vessels found buried in large pottery oil-jars in Gurgan in the early 1940's. They had apparently been buried in about 1220 to preserve them from the invading Mongol hordes that devastated the region. This discovery significantly changed our understanding of Iranian ceramics. Previously, very few pieces had been found intact. The texts consist of selections of Arabic poetry.

Provenance: Jacques O. Matossian Collection
E. Binney 3rd Collection

Published: Mehdi Bahrami, *Gurgan Faiences*, Cairo, 1949, pl. XVIII.

Exhibited: Smithsonian Travelling Exhibition, 1966-68.

122 Tile

Iran, 13th century
Ceramic; overpainted in luster
Width: 13.5 cm

Of star form, the tile is decorated in a greenish luster with a foliate arabesque on each side of a central line which is reserved on a white ground. Such tiles were often used on the lower portions of walls in mosques and madrasas. By combining cross-shaped tiles with star tiles, large surfaces could be covered with colorful patterns.

123 Bowl

Iran, early 13th century
Ceramic; overpainted in luster
Diameter: 16.5 cm

The bowl is finely potted, with slightly curved sides. The decoration is painted in intense coppery-red luster, with a seated figure in the center, and two bands of calligraphy – the outer one in reserve – separated by a band of scroll-pattern. The outside is decorated with large, round palmettes. Many bowls of this type were produced in Kashan, an important ceramic center of the 12th–14th centuries.



124 Bowl

Iran, 13th century
Ceramic; relief design, glazed and overpainted in red, blue and gold
Diameter: 24.5 cm

The distinctive character of this bowl results from the extensive gilding and the slight relief of the design. The gilded portions of the decoration are outlined in red, and two lines of blue bracket a frieze of running animals around the rim. Two small birds can be seen at the center, while the rest of the interior surface is covered with radiating palmettes and arabesques. The exterior is more restrained, with a simple diamond border and generously-spaced arabesque motifs.

Provenance: Adda Collection
E. Binney 3rd Collection

Published: B. Rackham, *Islamic Pottery and Italian Maiolica*, London, 1959, no.18, pl.11b.

Exhibited: Smithsonian Travelling Exhibition, 1966–1968.

◄ 125 Bowl

Iran, 13th century
Ceramic; underglaze painted decoration
Diameter: 21.3 cm

The bowl is beautifully made with thin rounded sides standing on a ring foot. It is decorated with a fine, looping vine, drawn in black, sprouting smaller leaves painted in blue or manganese, and larger leaves cross-hatched in black. The size of the leaves is reduced towards the center. The rim is black, and around the exterior of the bowl are black water-weeds.

The design is painted with extraordinary freedom and delicacy compared to the other examples of this group (see, for example, M. Jenkins, "Islamic Pottery," *The Metroplitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Spring 1983, no.23), which suggests a date in the second half of the 13th century. Such bowls are generally attributed to Kashan.

◄ 126 Bowl

Iran, 14th century
Ceramic; turquoise glaze over relief design
Diameter: 21.6 cm

The shape of the bowl, with its steep sides turning inwards at the shoulder and wide inverted rim, is typical of 14th-century bowls of the Mongol period. It has a raised inscription around the outside and is covered with a thick opaque glaze suggesting celadon. Similar vessels have been excavated at Sultaniya in northwestern Iran, the area which saw the first artistic renaissance after the devastation of the Mongols.



◄ 127 Plate

Turkey, early 16th century
Ceramic; colorless glaze over blue design
Diameter: 35 cm

The plate has a deep cavetto and a wide rim, which has a width exactly half the diameter of the central medallion. Around the rim is an undulating flowering vine painted in blue, outlined in darker blue. The central medallion has a similar circular vine terminating in a palmette. The areas of design are bordered by double blue lines. On the outside, single blue lines are drawn around the outer edge of the rim, around the top of the cavetto and above the low ring foot.

The shape, which is more typical of Italian faience, was rarely used by Turkish potters. Several examples are known with varying styles of decoration. One is of 'Abraham of Kütahya' type, decorated in blue and white, with a slightly narrower rim proportionately than this one (Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin, no.89, 120); another is of the 'Golden Horn' type (Keir Collection); and a third has polychrome floral decoration (formerly Adda Collection, published A. Rackham, *Islamic Pottery and Italian Maiolica*, London, 1959, no.152).

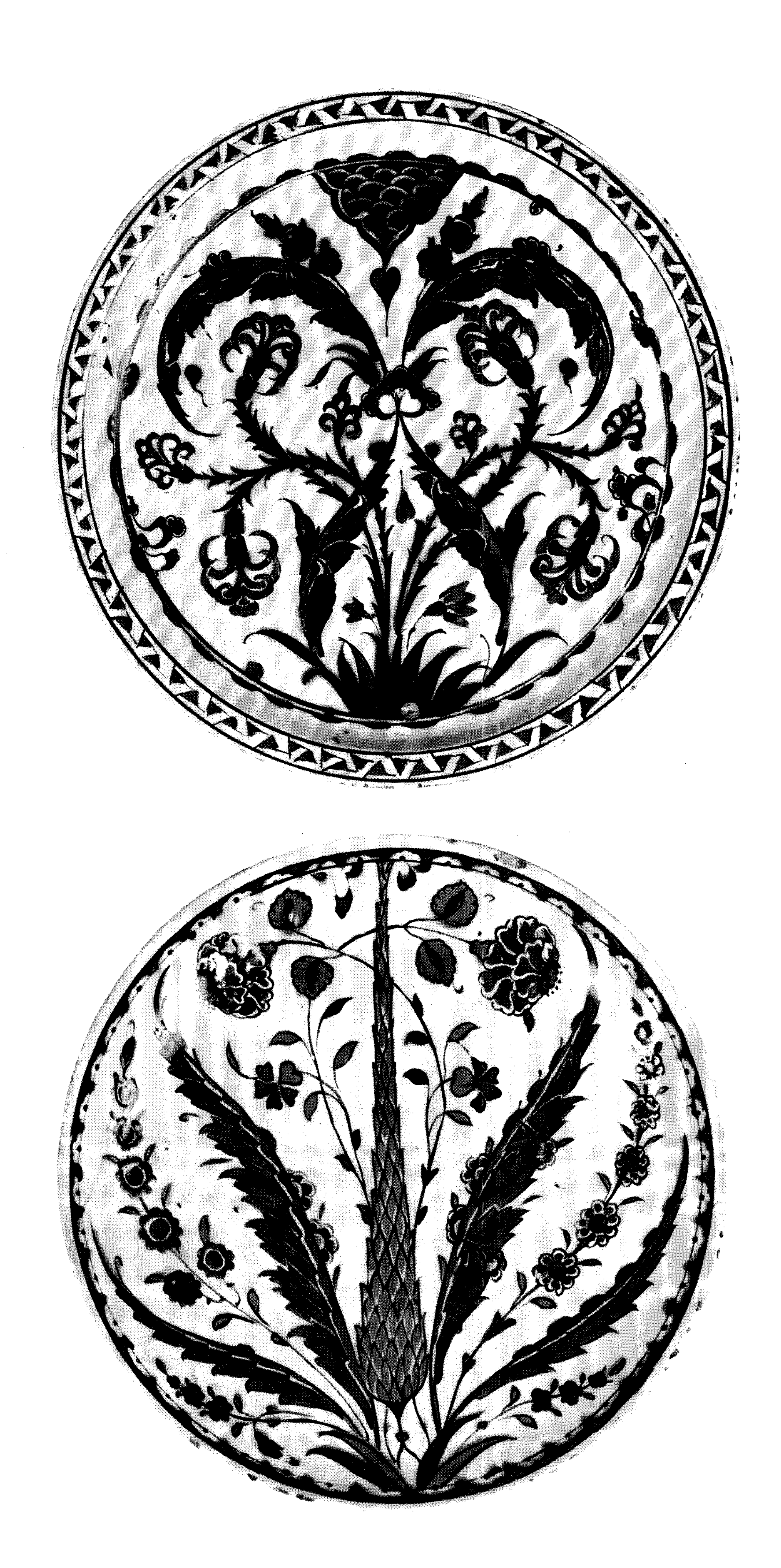
◄ 128 Plate

Turkey, first half 16th century
Ceramic; colorless glaze over turquoise and blue design
Diameter: 45.5 cm

The decoration of this bowl is painted blue and turquoise beneath a transparent glaze. In the context of the ceramic traditions of Iznik, this represents a departure. The earliest examples were decorated in blue and white; the addition of turquoise was the first step towards the full polychrome decoration used in the second half of the 16th century.

This example has two unusual features. It is among the largest blue and turquoise Iznik plates and it incorporates two separate designs, which is not seen together on any other piece. The tree with bare waving branches can be found in a slightly more stylized form on a plate in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (see A. Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, London, 1957, pl.30B), which is also decorated in blue and turquoise. The grape pattern around the tree is more usually found as a central design on its own. The shape of this piece and its design are derived from Chinese porcelain of the 14th and 15th centuries.

Published: *Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans: Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire,* ed. Y. Petsopoulos, London, 1982 pl.75.



◄ 129 Plate

Turkey, circa 1570–80
Ceramic; colorless glaze over polychrome design
Diameter: 32.2 cm

The shallow plate has a narrow inverted rim and stands on a low ring foot. The inside is decorated with a design of intersecting fern leaves painted in blue, with green details and red spines with a cloud scroll where they intersect. A spray of small red flowers at the top frames a green panel of scale pattern, outlined in black and blue. A spray of red hyacinth flowers sway among the fern leaves, their foliage painted in blue and green. The narrow rim has a geometric design with triangles filled in red. On the outside, blue pairs of tulips alternate with blue rosettes, with details painted in green.

◄ 130 Plate

Turkey, circa 1570–80
Ceramic; colorless glaze over polychrome design
Diameter: 29.8 cm

The shallow, rimless plate stands on a low ring foot. The interior is decorated with a central cypress tree painted in pale turquoise outlined in black and flanked by large feathery leaves painted in blue, with red spines and green details. Between the leaves are sprays of roses in red and blue and two red carnations on long, looping stems with turquoise and blue leaves. A blue band with half rosettes encloses the design. On the outside are pairs of blue tulips alternating with blue rosettes with green centers.

One of the amazing features of Iznik wares is how the potters could manipulate a limited number of basic motifs to produce a seemingly endless variety of different floral designs. In other examples showing elements identical to those in this plate, the composition and total effect are quite different.

131 Plate

Turkey, late 16th century
Ceramic; colorless glaze over polychrome design
Diameter: 35 cm

The deep plate has an everted circular rim and stands on a low rim foot. It is decorated with a central vase, which has a red ground and reserved floral designs with touches of blue, holding a spray of red carnations and a blue flower. The vase is framed by a spray of bluebells and red zinnias. The border has a wave and rock pattern in blue and black. On the outside are paired tulips alternating with rosettes.

The vase motif is unusual on a polychrome plate. It occurs on several pieces of the first half of the 16th century, decorated in blue and turquoise (see *Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans: Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Y. Petsopoulos, London, 1982, pl.64b).



◄ 132 Jug

Turkey, circa 1580
Ceramic; colorless glaze over polychrome design
Height: 25.5 cm

The pear-shaped body stands on an everted ring foot and is divided from the tall everted neck by a low raised collar. The handle has a small spur at its base. The body is decorated with a design of four blue fern leaves with red spines and green details, enclosing sprays of red carnations, rosebuds, green foliage and blue crocuses. The floral design is echoed around the neck and the handle has blue bands and stripes.

133 Incense Burner

Turkey, first half 18th century
Ceramic; colorless glaze over blue design; gilded metal fittings
Height: 21 cm

This ovoid incense burner is mounted on a high foot, set in a saucer-like base. The lid is pierced and capped with a delicate finial. The two halves of the incense burner are bound with metal rims which were originally gilded, and the chains prevent the domed cover from falling back. A potter's seal-mark is painted on the base.

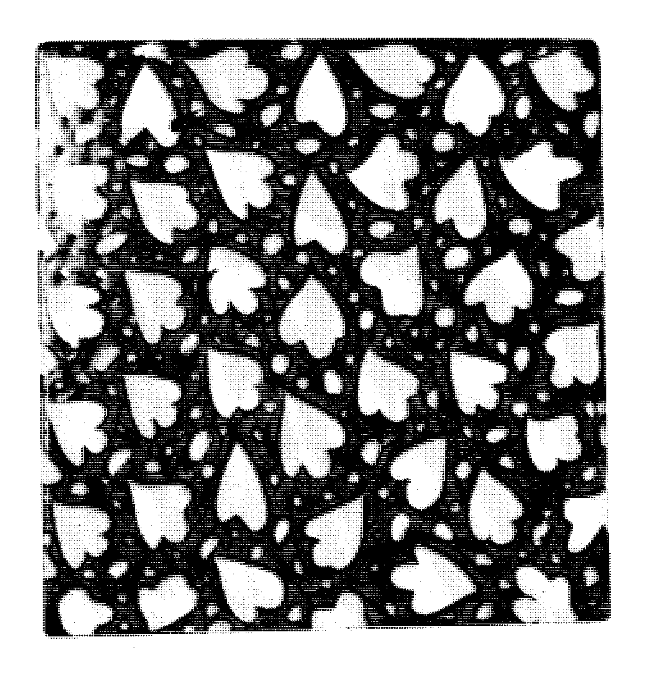
This is typical of the pottery produced at Kütahya in the 18th and 19th centuries which, while much more modest than the dazzling Iznik wares, nevertheless has great charm. The more usual type is painted with bright polychrome decoration, as is seen in a similar incense burner in the Tevfik Kuyas Collection (see *Anatolian Civilisations III*, Istanbul, 1983, E.303).

134 Plate

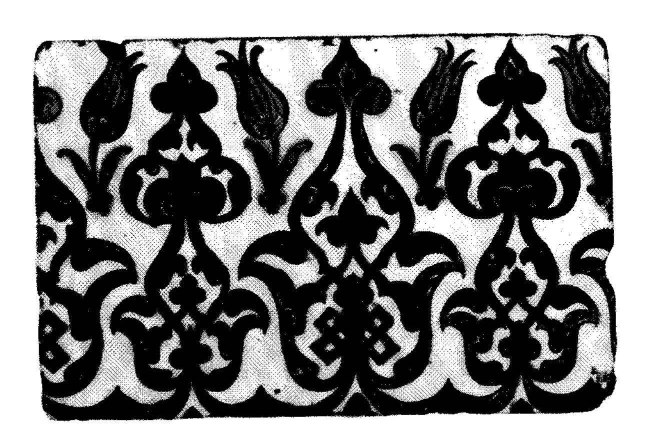
Iran, early 17th century
Ceramic; colorless glaze over red and blue design
Diameter: 41.5 cm

The plate is decorated with a dragon, painted in a pale reddish color on a blue background of scrolling lotus vines. The sides are fluted and the rim has floral scrolls. On the base are four tassel marks.

There seems to have been a large industry in southern Iran involved in making copies of Chinese porcelain. These were mixed in with the real Chinese porcelain when the caravans arrived from China to be loaded on ships bound for Europe. As Chinese porcelain commanded high prices, this was obviously a highly lucrative business. The tassel marks on the base of this plate attempt to imitate the Chinese seal marks often found on Ming Dynasty porcelain.







◄ 135 Tile

Turkey, circa 1575
Ceramic; colorless glaze over green design
Size: 24 cm × 23 cm

This unusual tile of marbleized design is similar to those in the Chamber of Sultan Murad III in the Topkapi Palace. There, tile panels of floral sprays were framed by tile columns, imitating antique marble. Another ceramic rendering of marble can be found on the lower part of the mihrab of the Mosque of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha in Istanbul, built in 1571 (see Tahsin Öz, *Turkish Ceramics*, Istanbul, n.d., pl.LI).

◄ 136 Two Border Tiles

a. Turkey, circa 1560
Ceramic; colorless glaze over polychrome design
Size: 25 cm × 15 cm

b. Turkey, circa 1570
Ceramic; colorless glaze over polychrome design
Size: 23.5 cm × 15 cm

The dimensions and the designs of these pieces indicate that they are border tiles. Tile a. consists of a well-defined floral scroll in which some blossoms are seen from above, while others, like the tulip, are shown from the side pierced by a leaf. The coloristic effect of this tile is intensified by the rich blue ground framed by turquoise stripes. Tile b. has a repeating pattern of large-lobed crest motifs alternating with smaller doubled crests. Both tiles exhibit the full palette of Iznik polychrome wares, although their respective visual effects are quite different.

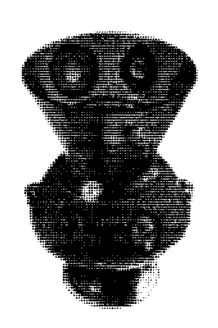
◄ 137 Two Square Tiles

a. Turkey, circa 1530
Ceramic; colorless glaze over blue and turquoise design
Size: 25 cm square

b. Turkey, circa 1570
Ceramic; colorless glaze over polychrome design
Size: 24.5 cm square

These two tiles reflect both the tradition and evolution of Ottoman tile-making, of which the most famous and well-documented center of production was Iznik. In the earliest stages, the color scheme was confined to blue against a white ground. Turquoise was incorporated into the palette in the first half of the 16th century, a stage epitomized by tile a. Subsequently, green and purple were added as well as the distinctive rich red, which was applied in slight relief. Tile b. shows two shades of blue in addition to green and red.

Glass





138 Two Rim Fragments of Glass Vessels

Egypt, 8th century
Glass, painted in brown luster
a. 6 cm × 2.3 cm
b. 5.3 cm × 4 cm

The technique of painting in luster on glass is associated primarily with Fustat, Egypt. An important luster-painted cup found there, and now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, bears the name of Abd al-Samad bin Ali, who was governor of Egypt for one month in 773 (see *The Arts of Islam*, London. 1976, no.119). Like that example, the two fragments here exhibit both epigraphic and vegetal decoration. Fragment a. is painted on the inside in brown luster and has a Kufic inscription around the top and panels of hatching below. Both the interior and exterior of fragment b. are painted in brown luster and show the end of an inscription and a part of a palmette.

◄ 139 Mosque Lamp

Iran, 8th–10th century
Colorless glass with applied handles and thread designs
Height: 18 cm

This lamp, intended originally to hang from six chains, is made of colorless glass with a pronounced shoulder and applied handles. It has a cylindrical wick-holder rising 8 cm from the base. The exterior derives its ornamental appeal from glass threads which were applied to the surface while the vessel was hot. They loop above the mouth of the lamp and trail down the spine of each handle, picking up a rhythmic wave just above the shoulder of the lamp.

The glass industry already existed in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Iran when the Muslim armies arrived in these lands. While in the early Islamic period the technology of glass-making inherited from the late classical period continued to be used, the forms and decoration underwent a gradual change in accordance with a new culture. One of the effects of the establishment of Islam was the breakdown of old political boundaries, which greatly increased cultural and commercial interchange between countries. As a result, artistic ideas spread rapidly, and it is often impossible to tell whether a glass was made in Iran, in Syria or in Egypt. Identification is further confused by the glass-makers who travelled from one center to another, and by the use of glass as a container to export such commodities as perfume, which was often shipped far afield. The excavation sites such as Susa, Nishapur, Samarra and Fustat have provided much reliable information for dating glass, but less for determining its provenance. Between the 8th century and the early 11th century, glass-makers decorated their vessels by modulating the surface of the glass. This was achieved by a variety of techniques, such as applying threads, mold-blowing, engraving and wheel-cutting.



140 Bottle

Iran, 9th century
Glass, mold-blown with applied thread design
Height: 16 cm

This bottle was mold-blown of greenish glass. The low swelling body is enhanced by a grape pattern in relief, which can be stylistically related to the stucco and wood carving of Samarra. On the neck, there is applied thread near the body and a bulging collar just below the point at which the neck flares open. The molds in which such pieces were blown were made of pottery or, rarely, wood and were designed in two pieces. After setting, these could easily be separated to extract the vessel.

◄ 141 Bottle

Iran, 9th century
Colorless glass with wheel cut and engraved designs
Height: 20 cm

This bottle has a slightly-flaring cylindrical body, a tapering neck and a wide, flattened rim. The craftsman appears to have used two techniques to enliven the surface of this vessel – wheel-cutting and engraving. The former was developed under the Sasanians in Iran and could be used to great effect for faceted geometric designs. Such motifs appear on the neck of this vessel. Engraving, seen on the body of the vessel, produced a more linear effect and could be used safely on a thinner surface.

◄ 142 Bottle

Iran, 10th–11th century
Blue glass with incised design
Height: 25 cm

This bottle, which stands on a ring foot, has a bulbous body and a tall, straight neck. Bands of geometric motifs, including concentric circles, hatching and notching, are incised into the surface. Glass color, like the strong blue hue seen here, was obtained by adding metallic oxides to clear, molten glass. The exact formula for a particular color would have been a closely-guarded secret passed from master to apprentice.

◄ 143 Drinking Cup

Iran, 9th–10th century
Turquoise glass
Height: 9 cm
Diameter: 13 cm

The body of this vessel stands on a ring foot and has a high, wide neck and a handle with a disc-shaped knob. The glass is a brilliant turquoise color enhanced by a thick layer of iridescence. The design of this cup was dictated largely by functional concerns.





◄ 144 Beaker

Iran, 9th–10th century
Colorless glass with applied thread design
Height: 10 cm

This flaring cup stands on a flat, circular foot. It is formed of very thin, colorless glass and is decorated by threads applied to the outside surface.

◄ 145 Goblet

Iran, 12th century
Greenish glass with applied thread design
Height: 15.2 cm

This goblet is both elegant and slightly enigmatic. The flaring cup, decorated with applied green and brown threads, stands on a tall stem which is bisected by a flat disc. The foot is a small, unstable support and, even empty, the piece's balance is precarious. Other comparable pieces indicate that the design was deliberate rather than accidental; thus, it must have been intended to be held constantly in the hand.

◄ 146 Bottle

Iran, 9th–10th century
Colorless glass with applied thread design
Height: 13 cm

Of colorless glass, this bottle has a spherical body and a tall neck, pinched in at the base. It is decorated with thread looped around the body and applied to the neck. Tongs were used to pinch the glass surface, anchoring the threads in place. Such pinching techniques had been used for decorative purposes in pre-Islamic Iran, but were largely abandoned in favor of more sophisticated practices.

◄ 147 Jug

Syria, 12th century
Amber glass with white marvered design
Height: 13 cm

The jug has a pear-shaped body rising to a flared neck with a rolled lip. A thread is applied around the base of the neck, and a handle is applied to one side. The glass is amber in color with white marvered decoration.

The technique of marvering entailed winding opaque glass threads around a vessel while still hot. The threads were then pressed into the surface by means of a stone rod. The technique was already practised in Syria in Roman times. On this vessel, the marvered threads have been dragged with a comb-like tool to form the loops.



◄ 148 Bottle

Syria, second quarter of 13th century
Colorless glass with enamelled and gilded design
Height: 32 cm

Inscriptions: *Around the neck*

"Glory to our lord, the Sultan, the King, the possessing, the learned, the just, the holy warrior, the defender"

Around the body

"Glory to our lord, the Sultan, the King, the possessing, the learned, the just, the holy warrior, the victorious, the protector of frontiers, the fortified by God, the triumphant, the Sultan of Islam and Muslims, the subduer of infidels and rebels . . . Malik . . . Ghazi"

Around the upper body is a star-like design of eight, long red points linked to each other around the base of the neck, each with a green 'eye' at the top and gilding. Between the points are panels of floral arabesques. Below is a cursive inscription band reserved on blue, encircling the widest part of the body. Another similar inscription band decorates the lower part of the neck. The foot and neck have been restored in silver.

Another bottle of identical form with the titles of Salah al-Din Yusuf (1237–59), the last Ayyubid ruler of Aleppo, is in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no.4261, Gift of Prince Yusuf Kamal, 1913 (see *The Arts of Islam*, London, 1976, no.135).

The glass houses of Iran and Iraq ceased producing fine decorated glass by the 12th century. Thereafter, between the 12th and 14th centuries, the main centers for glass were located in Syria and Egypt. Here, rather than modulating the surface of the glass, the craftsmen's preoccupation was to achieve polychrome effects in decoration. One technique was marvering, pressing colored threads into the molten surface of the vessel, which was inherited from the Roman period in Syria. The second technique, which remains the outstanding contribution of Islamic artisans to the history of glass-making, was enamelling. The use of fired pigments on glass was known in pre-Islamic times, but the Muslim craftsmen in Syria perfected the technique of fusing colored glass pastes onto the surface of the vessel by firing. Aleppo and Damascus were the two main centers for enamelled glass, which was further embellished with gilding. Workshops were also set up in Cairo to fulfill the orders for lamps for numerous religious buildings constructed under the Mamluks. The capture of Damascus by Timur, who removed most of the glass-makers to his capital Samarqand, and the economic decline under the later Mamluks in Egypt spelled the end of this remarkable phase of glass-making.



◄ 149 Candlestick

Syria, circa 1240–50
Colorless glass with enamelled and gilded designs
Height: 22.6 cm
Base diameter: 20 cm

Inscriptions: "Glory to our lord, the King, the learned, the just, the diligent, the warrior, the watcher in advance, the guardian of the borders, the assisted of God, the mighty, the victorious" (repeated)

The slightly-tapering cylindrical body is decorated with a gold geometric trellis outlined in red defining stars, octagons and hexagons painted in red, blue, green and white. The larger units contain a gold motif. Below this runs an inscription band of Thuluth script written in gold on a red background, which is enamelled on the inside. A raised ring separates the inscription from the lower scroll reserved in blue. The shoulder pan, slightly depressed with a raised edge, is decorated with an interlocking arcade design in red and white against a blue ground with gilded floral motifs. The holder has an arabesque design in blue with a raised rim near the top.

Both the form and decoration were inspired by metalwork from the period. At this early date glass workers were still experimenting with many different ideas, and produced a great variety of vessels in enamelled glass. Later, in the Mamluk period, the repertoire of forms and decorations became much more restricted and standardized. Only one other comparable piece has been recorded, which was previously in the Eumorfopoulos Collection (see "Moslem Objects in the Eumorfopoulos Collection" by Mrs. R. L. Devonshire in *Apollo*, January, 1927). It was one of the pieces of Mamluk glass along with a bowl and goblet, which Mr. Eumorfopoulos acquired in China about eighty years ago.
Mr. Eumorfopoulos's glass candlestick was slightly smaller in size with a design of arabesques around the body, with the holder missing.
A style of decoration similar to that on the candlestick illustrated here is used on a glass basin in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, (no.44.235), and on a glass tray in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, (no.91.1.1533).

Published: Gustav Schmoranz, *Old Oriental Gilt, and Enamelled Glass Vessels*, London 1899, fig.34, p.36.
Burlington Magazine, September, 1910.
Seymour de Ricci, *Les Arts*, 1914.
C.J. Lamm, *Mittelalterliche Gläser und Steinschnittarbeiten aus dem Nahen Osten*, Berlin, 1930, pl.126, no.17.
E. Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks*, Washington D.C., 1981, p.132, note 1.



◄ 150 Mosque Lamp

Syria, 14th century
Colorless glass with enamelled and gilded design
Height: 33 cm

The blue calligraphy around the body is outlined in gold and red. The red outlined calligraphy on the neck was originally filled in with gilding, of which only traces now remain. Both zones of epigraphy consist of a repeated phrase, "the wise." Besides the calligraphy, only the red outlines of the designs and the small flowers in white, pink and red are enamelled on the outside. The rest of the enamelled decorations, the blue and green medallions, the frames of the handles, and the bands of red, are applied from the inside of the lamp. Gold floral scrolls on the outside decorate the colored areas. The foot of the lamp is restored.

Lamps such as this one were often ordered by Sultans and dignitaries to adorn mosques and madrasas, in which they were suspended by chains from the ceiling. This style of elongated calligraphy is rarely found on mosque lamps, which usually feature a much bolder form of Mamluk Thuluth writing. A covered stem-bowl in the Toledo Museum of Glass, Ohio, has a similar type of inscription (illustrated in Christie's *Fine Islamic Works of Art*, June 23, 1970, lot 119).



◄ 151 Egg from the Chain of a Mosque Lamp

Syria or Egypt, 14th century
Colorless glass with enamelled design
Height: 14 cm
Diameter: 11.5 cm

Inscriptions: Sura LXXVI, v.4–6.

Glass eggs were suspended above mosque lamps, providing the link between the six or eight chains holding the lamp and single chain from the ceiling. It is said that one of the functions of such eggs was to prevent small animals from climbing down the chain to get at the oil in the lamps.

This egg is enhanced with a Qur'anic inscription, left in reserve against blue enamel in four cartouches. The cartouches are interspersed with ogival panels containing floral sprays. A scalloped disc with radial lines is enamelled in red around each end where suspension rings are secured by metal wire threads running through the body of the egg.

◄ 152 Beaker

Syria or Egypt, 13th century
Colorless glass with enamelled design
Height: 14.7 cm

This vessel with boldly-flaring sides exhibits minimal but elegant enamelled decoration. It consists of a single band twisting into three interlaced star knots and enlivened by raised dots of translucent blue. Beakers of this exact shape can be seen in a depiction of a physician's home in a Syrian manuscript, *Risalat Dawat al-Atibba* of al-Mukhtar bin al-Hasan bin Butlan," dated 1273 (see R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, New York, 1977, p.144). Similar glasses are held by seated courtiers among the figures inlaid on a bowl in the Louvre signed by Ibn al-Zayn (MAO 331; see E. Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks*, Washington, D.C., 1981, no.20).

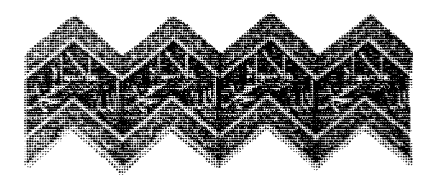
Published: C. J. Lamm, *Mittelalterliche Gläser und Steinschnittarbeiten aus dem Nahen Osten*, Berlin, 1929, vol.II, pl.96, no.9.

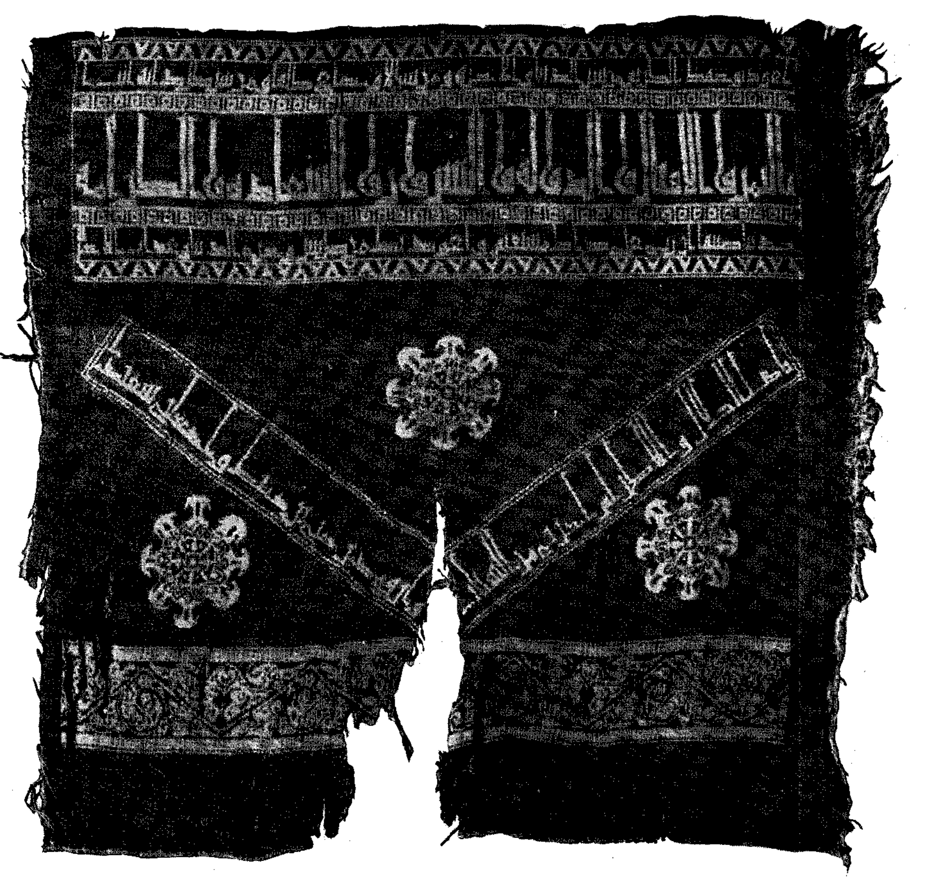
◄ 153 Beaker

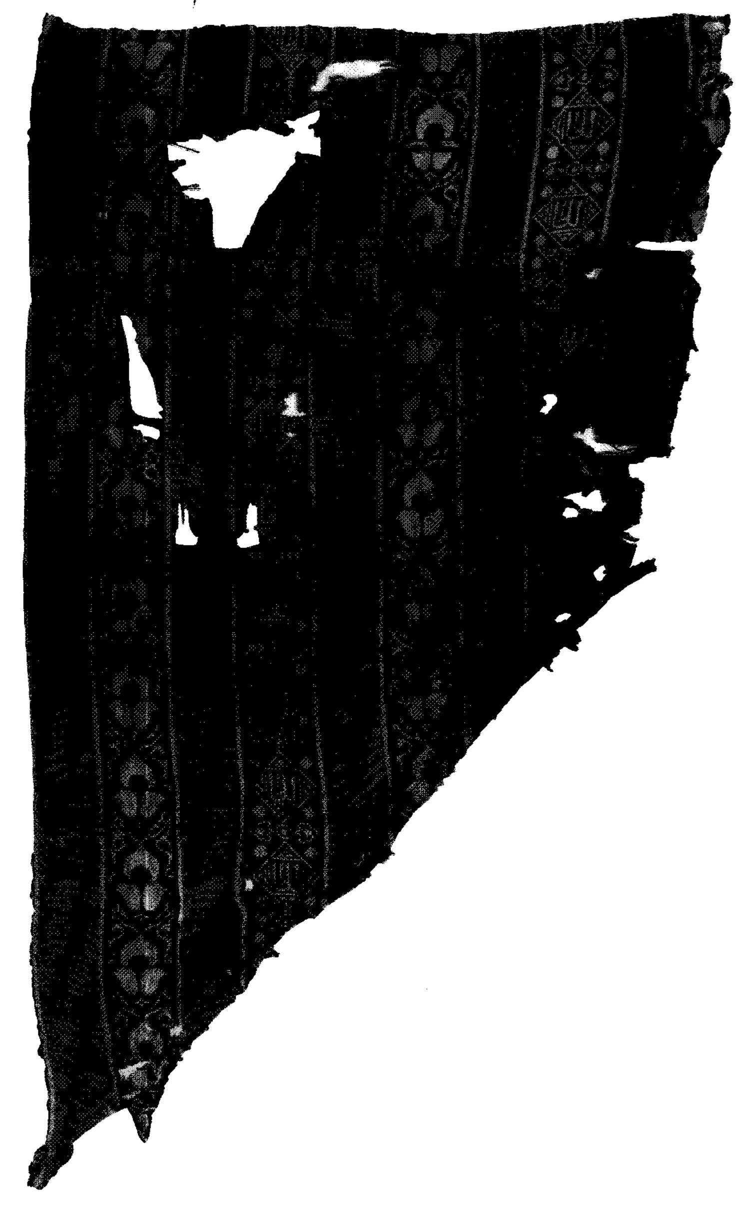
Syria or Egypt, 14th century
Colorless glass with enamelled design
Height: 18.4 cm

This cylindrical beaker, flaring at the top, is made of rather thick glass. Its seemingly hasty decoration – a vine pattern, birds and knots – is enamelled in fine red lines. Traces of gilding remain as well. While the shape of this vessel is not uncommon, the decorative themes with which such beakers are enhanced range from the monochromatic economy of this example to extensive figural compositions executed in a wide range of colors.

Textiles







◄ 154 Kaftan Sleeve

Iran, 10th century
Woven silk
Size: 34 cm × 25.3 cm

Inscriptions: *The wide band*

"With good-fortune and prosperity and wealth and joy and happiness and honor"

The narrow bands above and below the wide band

"I seek refuge with the Merciful . . . from the evil of this world and the other world and from . . . and from the evil of all beasts. You grasp it by its forelock, surely my Lord is the right path, and I seek refuge in thee from all the evils of this world and the torments of the other world"

The V band

"O the owner of splendor and honor, reward . . . from youth and . . . blissful"

This fragment is one of a remarkable group of textiles discovered over 50 years ago in a necropolis in Rayy, south of Tehran. A complete kaftan with identical sleeves is known (see Dorothy Shepherd, "Medieval Persian Silks in Fact and Fancy," *Bulletin de Liaison du Centre International d'Etude des Textiles Anciens*, Lyon, 1974, fig.20) so it is possible to reconstruct its original purpose. The exquisite calligraphy and the extensive vocabulary of decorative motifs attest to the weaver's considerable technical expertise.

◄ 155 Textile Fragment

Egypt, 15th century
Woven silk
Length: 51 cm
Width: 30.5 cm

The pattern of this fabric is based on a repeat of dark blue bands with two designs separated by turquoise stripes. One of the bands is composed of a row of lotus blossoms, rendered in ivory with turquoise outlines. The second band has a row of squares with an ivory inscription, an abbreviation of the word "al-Sultan," enclosed by a turquoise lozenge.

This is probably part of a sleeve of a robe. Another piece of similar shape is in the Madina Collection in New York (see E. Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks*, Washington, D.C., 1981, no.119). A smaller fragment of the same textile is owned by the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Exhibited: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1982.



◄ 156 Textile Fragment

Iran, 16th century
Woven silk, metal thread
Height: 42 cm
Width: 61 cm

Kashan was one of the main centers of weaving in Iran, and certainly one of the few places capable of producing complex textile designs of this nature. The background was originally entirely of silver thread which is now to a large extent disintegrated to show the saffron colored warps underneath. The subject matter is obscure but it probably represents a seated sage either attended by a disciple or set in contrast with a youth more interested in the beauties of nature than learning. The exact allusion would undoubtedly have been obvious to contemporaries of the textile. Great attention has been paid to variations in detail in order to variegate the effect of a repeated design. This can be seen in the sequence of colors at the roots of the tree stumps and the trees, the book covers, the loin cloths and the flowers in the hand of the youth, which are subtly varied on each row.

This belongs to a little-known group of figural textiles. Another example in the Cleveland Museum of Art is signed by Abdul al-Qasim Kashani who describes himself as "servant of the court," and is dated 929 (1523). One of the other known examples is dated 941 (1534–35). Therefore, despite the rather curious style which relates more to early 17th-century miniature painting, it seems that this textile dates from the 16th century.

◄ 157 Textile Fragment

Made by Shams

Central Asia (?), first half of 17th century
Woven silk
Size with border: 114 cm × 141 cm
Size of figural panel: 76 cm × 67 cm

The panel has an apricot-colored background, woven with a repeated motif of a standing female figure accompanied by a partridge in a rocky landscape and a small tree. The figure is dressed in a long coat of chevron-pattern stripes in silver, blue and apricot thread that covers a greenish robe tied with a sash and a pink shirt with silver clover-leaf buttons. She wears jewelry and a shawl around her shoulders; her hair is adorned with pearls and a scarf; and her silver shoes are curled at the toes. The signature "amal Shams" is written on the skirt of the robe. The partridge is blue with silver wings. The tree is woven in silver thread with silver, blue and apricot leaves.

The weaving is of extraordinarily fine quality, and the large figure motif is in the tradition of Safavid and Mughal design of the early 17th century. Nevertheless, the facial features, the hair style and the posture of the figure all have a more Far Eastern flavor, as does the color scheme. The artist Shams was, therefore, probably working in Central Asia, perhaps even as far east as Chinese Turkestan, producing fine silks for export to India and Iran. Turkestan had a long tradition of silk weaving and a large Muslim population.

The silk panel is framed in four bands of patterned Ming Dynasty silk, which suggests that it stayed close to where it was woven until more recent times.

◄ 158 The Morosini Carpet

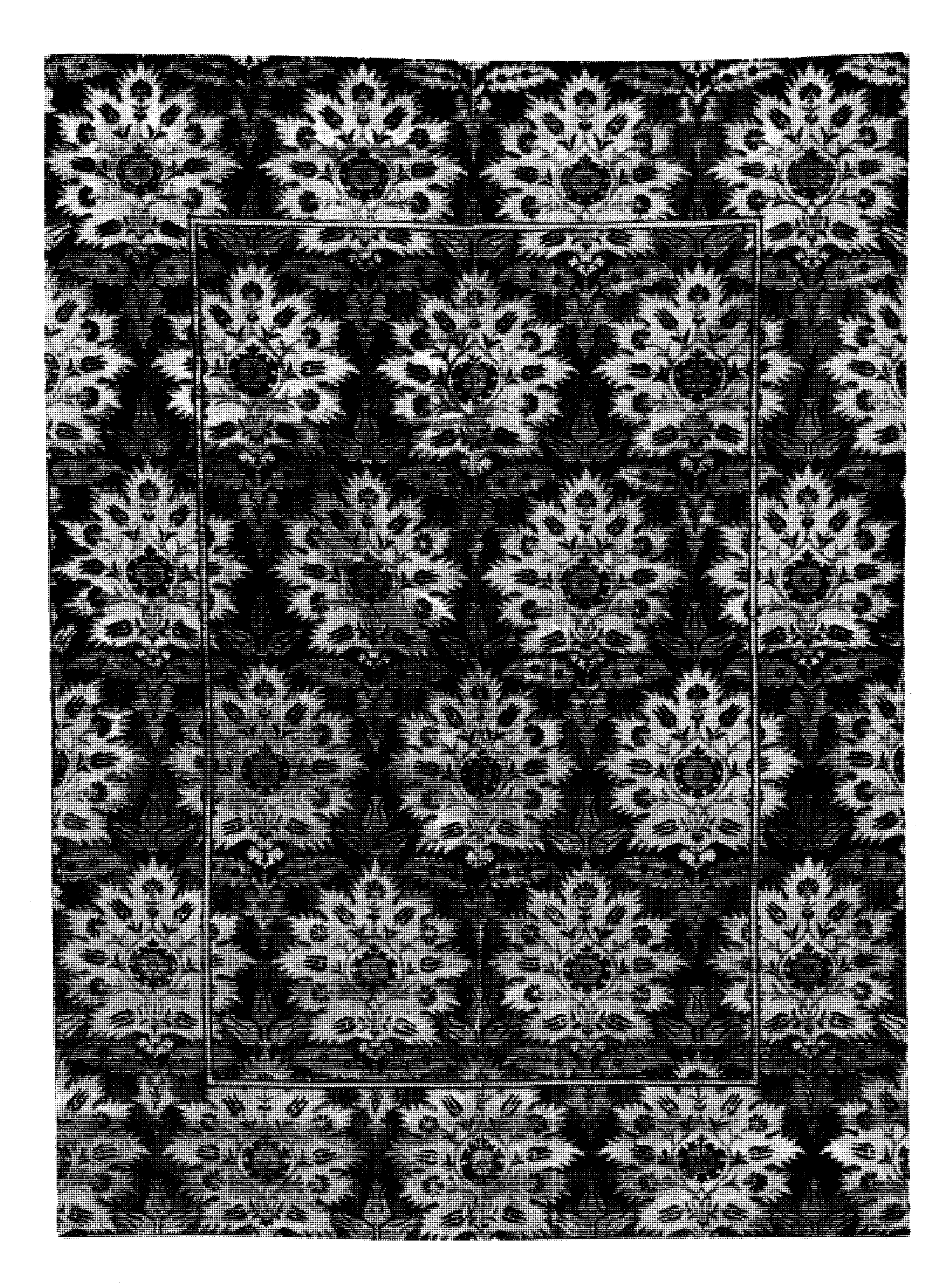
Iran, second half 16th century
Wool, dyed
Length: 5 m 76 cm
Width: 2 m 57 cm

Before the 16th century, carpet designs were based on the traditional Turkic format which had no doubt been brought westwards from Central Asia by the migrating Turks in the 10th to 12th centuries (see A. Briggs, "Timurid Carpets," *Ars Islamica*, vol.VII, 1940, pp.20–54; and vols. XI–XII, 1946, pp.146–58). Around 1500, however, carpet weaving in Iran was revolutionized when court painters were commissioned to reproduce new carpet designs. The use of their detailed cartoons permitted weavers to render accurately much more complex patterns than had previously been possible.

The central medallion pattern, with a quarter-medallion in each corner, was the earliest and most widely-used of the new repertoire of designs in the 16th century. It is interesting to notice in this carpet the contrast between the central medallion and its surrounding field. The red ground is like a realm of wild animals, where tigers, leopards and lions stalk ibexes and deer among the dense foliage. The green medallion is a garden of peace in its midst, where ducks float on a pond shaded by trees. The branches are laden with pomegranates and blossoms, and perched among them are pheasants, parrots and songbirds.

The history of this carpet lends it special significance. It was sent as a gift by the Safavid Shah Sulaiman (1667–94) to Francesco Morosini when he was elected Doge of Venice in 1688. This gesture of goodwill had serious political implications, for the Safavid court had long hoped to cement a relationship with Venice. The Morosini family played a major role in the history of the Venetian Republic from the 12th century onwards. Francesco was probably its best-known member, having gained renown as one of the greatest sea captains of the 17th century before being elected Doge. Many fine Safavid carpets now in European museums were discovered in Italy, which is no doubt due to the diplomatic relationship between Iran and Venice.

Provenance: The Morosini Family Collection.



159 Textile Fragment

Turkey, second half of the 16th century
Gold brocade on green satin
Length: 66 cm
Width: 21.5 cm

The fragment has an ogival trellis design of white scale-pattern on an emerald green ground. A large gold flowerhead is enclosed in each compartment with a pink tulip in the middle and a spray of small blue flowers.

Another piece of the same textile is in the Keir Collection, London (see Freiderich Spuhler, *Islamic Carpets and Textiles in the Keir Collection*, London, 1978, no.127). It was probably made for an imperial kaftan. Its striking range of colors and crisp definition of design show why the Ottoman weavers have been held in such esteem.

160 Cushion Cover

Turkey, 16th century
Silk velvet with silver brocaded details

Length: 122 cm
Width: 65.5 cm

The very rich quality of this cushion cover is achieved by the combination of silver and gold set off against the glowing red background. The effect of gold is achieved by allowing the saffron-colored warps to show through the metallic threads. Floral stems, border lines and other details are picked out in moss green.

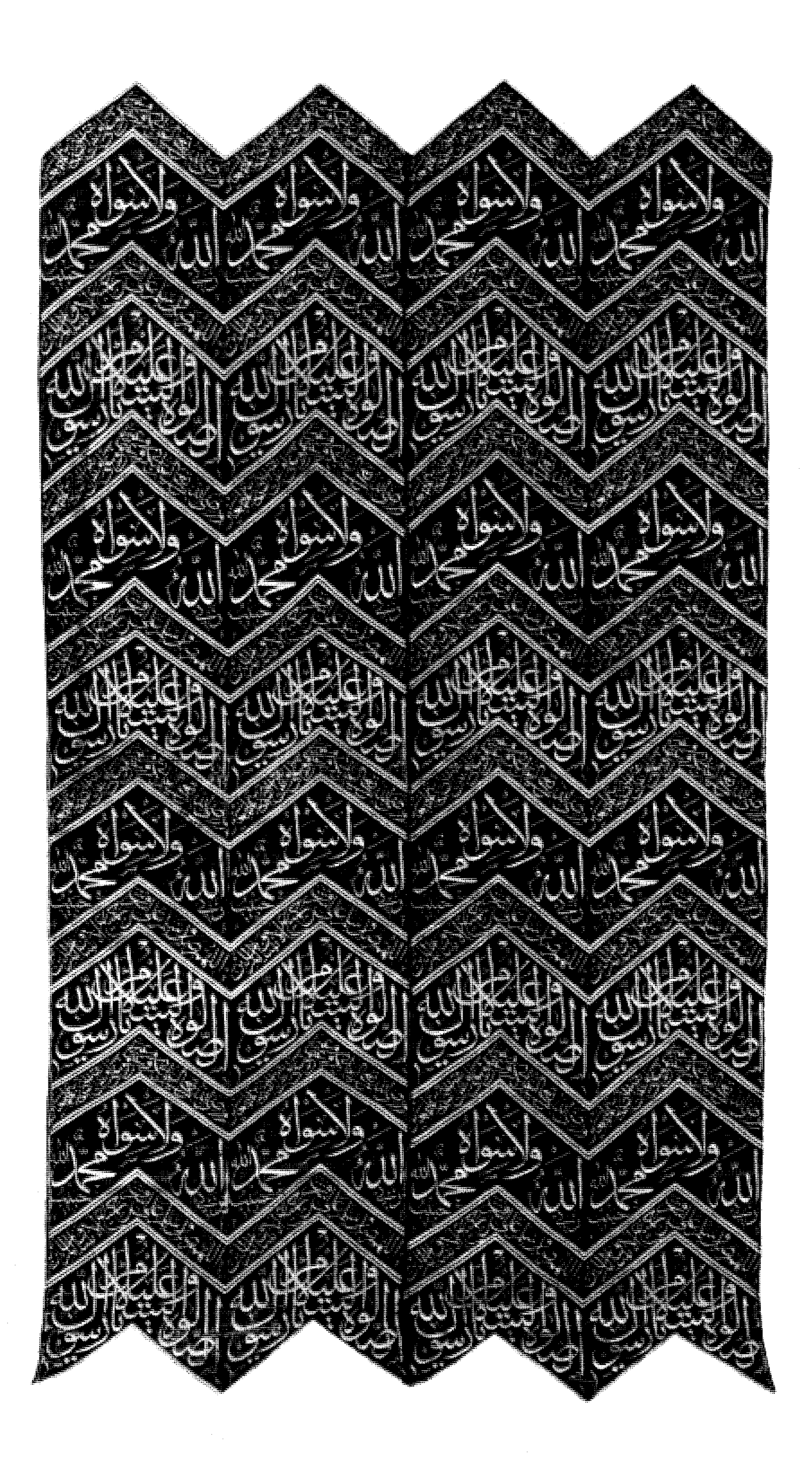
Published: *Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans: Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Y. Petsopoulos, London 1982, no.17.

Exhibited: "Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans, Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire," London, 1982.

◄ 161 Textile Panel

Turkey, second half of 16th century
Silk velvet with silver brocaded details
Height: 169 cm
Width: 125 cm

The panel is woven in two parts and joined down the middle. The red ground has a design of palmettes, originally with a metal thread background enclosing a spray of tulips and carnations. The use of an inner frame cutting through the pattern is used with a variety of repeat pattern designs and is a highly-effective decorative device. A pair to this panel is in the Benaki Museum, Athens (see *Les Arts Décoratifs Musulmans*, Paris, 1925, pl.52).



◄ 162 Textile Panel

Turkey, second half of 17th century
Silk brocade
Length: 2 m 41 cm
Width: 1 m 34 cm

Inscriptions: *Top narrow band*
"May God be pleased with Abu Bakr and Omar and Uthman and Ali and with all the other companions" (of the Prophet).

Top broad band
"God there is none but He – Muhammad."

Second narrow band
"Oh God, bless and give peace to their nobilities all the prophets and emissaries."

Second broad band
"Blessing and peace upon you, the Prophet of God"

The panel is woven in two parts and is a masterpiece of calligraphy rendered in a woven textile. Another panel of identical design is in the Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon, (see A. Welch, *Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World*, Asia Society, 1979, no.34).

Exhibited: "The Arts of Islam," The Arts Council of Great Britain, Hayward Gallery, London, 1976, no.32.

Published: *Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans: Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Y. Petsopoulos, London, 1982, pl.158.

163 Textile Panel

Turkey, second half of 17th century
Silk brocade
Length: 1 m 89 cm
Width: 1 m 34 cm

The panel is in two parts woven with calligraphy in white, slightly raised against a cherry red satin background. The calligraphy is arranged in zig-zag bands with a main band framed by narrower borders of smaller inscriptions. The bands are separated from each other by an open section woven with cartouches and medallions containing calligraphy (see The David Collection, Islamic Art, Copenhagen 1975, cover illustration, for another section of the same cloth).

Published: *Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans, Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire,* ed. Y. Petsopoulos, London, 1982, pl.158.



◄ 164 Saddle Cloth

Turkey, circa 1600
Satin, embroidered with silk, silver and gold threads
Length: 78 cm
Width: 1 m

The Ottoman appreciation of beautiful materials is evident in the craftsmanship of this saddle cloth. The floral design is embroidered in gold and silver thread on a satin ground with touches of brilliant color added in multi-colored silks. The style of decoration is similar to that found on a satin illustrated in *Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans: Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Y. Petsopoulos, London, 1982, pl.150.

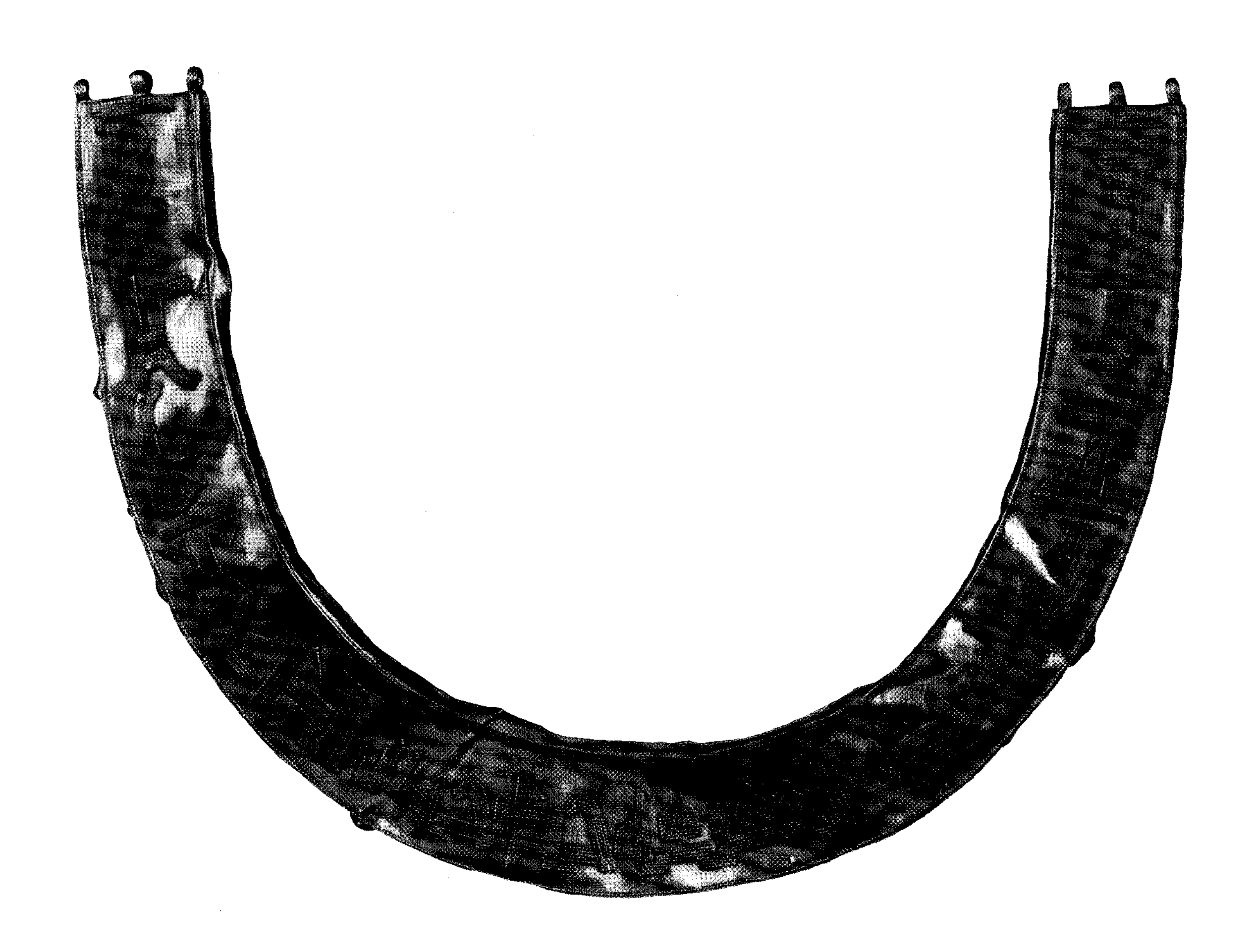
◄ 165 Tent Hanging

Syria, circa. 1700
Silk with silver and gold thread
Size: 7 m 90 cm × 2 m 60 cm

The purple ground is woven with a design of nine Mihrab arches outlined in silver thread with a floral arabesque design. The field of each Mihrab has staggered rows of octagonal stars, alternately silver and gold in color and enclosing floral motifs. White paired leaves fill the intervening spaces. The purple columns between the Mihrabs have a repeat motif of eight-petal rosettes which are silver in the lower-half and gold in the upper-half. At the top of each column is a palmette with tulips and carnations filling the spandrels. The green border has a reciprocal motif of silver and gold palmettes on a cream-colored stem, which is set between silver guard stripes with a floral undulating vine.

Ivories, Jewelry and Precious Objects







◄ 166 Necklace

Egypt, 10th–11th century
Gold
Diameter: 22 cm

Inscriptions: "Perpetual happiness for the modest lady Khadija, daughter of the Da'i, may her majesty endure forever"

This necklace is constructed in narrow box-like sections. Applied to the surface are twisted wire and granulations to delineate a Kufic inscription. Twisted wire is also used along the edges. The three loops, which remain at each end of the collar, were probably attached to series of rectangular plaques.

This piece is one of the most impressive examples of jewelry to have survived from the early Islamic period. The use of the term Da'i in the inscription ("the one who intones the call to prayer"), and the technique of manufacture both suggest that it was made in Fatimid Egypt.

Provenance: E. Binney 3rd Collection

◄ 167 Gold Coin

Baghdad, 365 AH/975 AD
Size: 35 mm diameter
Weight: 19.35 grams

Inscriptions: *Obverse*
"There is no god but God, there is no partner to Him. It was minted in Medinat al-Salam, the year 365" (975).

Reverse
"There is no god but God, Muhammad the Messenger of God, may the blessing of God be upon him, al-Ta'i Li-llah, the Amir 'Izz-al-Dawla."

The coin is struck in the name of the powerful Buyid Emir Izz-al-Dawla Bakhtiyar (937–978) who ruled at Baghdad under the titular authority of the Abbassid Caliph al-Ta'i Li-llah (974–991). Only three examples of this coin are known, one of which is in the Ethnographical Museum, Ankara, (see D. and J. Sourdel, *Les Civilisations de l'Islam Classique*, Paris 1968, pl. 29). It has been suggested that the coin was struck to commemorate the marriage of Izz-al-Dawla's daughter to the Caliph in 975.



◄ 168 Gold Jewelry from the 12th to 13th Century

a. A pair of earrings
Sheet gold, crescent shaped, decorated with twisted wire
Dimensions: 1.9 cm diameter

b. A pair of earrings
Sheet gold beads, decorated with wire and granulation
Dimensions: 3.8 cm diameter
(See M. Jenkins and M. Keene, *Islamic Jewelry in the Metropolitan Museum*, New York, 1983, no.51E.)

c. A pair of earrings
Sheet metal, crescent shaped, decorated with twisted wire and granulation
Dimensions: 2.2 cm diameter
(See Ibid, no.50B.)

d. Earring
Sheet gold and twisted wire
Dimensions: 4.5 cm diameter

e. A pair of pendants
Sheet gold, twisted wire and granulation
Dimensions: 11.5 cm long

f. Earring
Sheet gold and wire, set with turquoise and glass
Dimensions: 3.8 cm diameter

g. A pair of earrings
Sheet gold, with wire and granulation, set with garnet
Dimensions: 4 cm long

h. Earring
Twisted gold wire and granulation
Dimensions: 4.1 cm long
The form of the icosahedron, with twenty triangular faces, is found in a similar earring in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (see Ibid, no.20B).

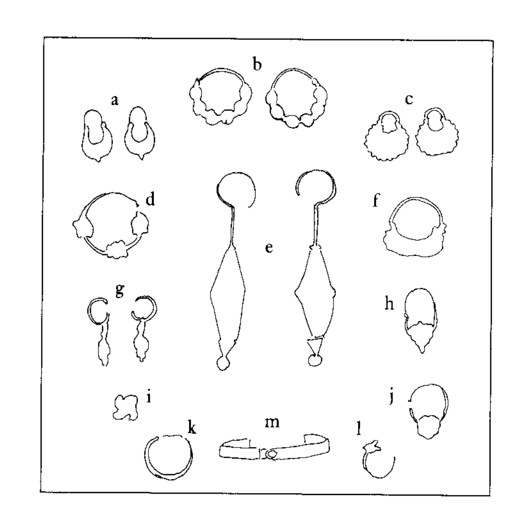
i. Button
Sheet gold with wire and granulation
Dimensions: 2 cm diameter

j. Earring
Twisted gold wire and granulation
Dimensions: 3.2 cm long

k. Earring
Gold wire
Dimensions: 3 cm diameter

l. Earring
Gold wire
Dimensions: 2.5 cm diameter

m. Bracelet
Sheet gold with niello decoration and lion-headed finials
Dimensions: 5.6 cm diameter





◄ 169 Ring

Afghanistan, 15th century
Gold set with amethyst and ruby
Height: 3.1 cm
Diameter: 2.3 cm

Inscriptions: *Around the bezel*
"Compassion, justice and generosity are three attributes which distinguish the King"

Under the mount
"Victory in God"

This ring of finely-wrought gold has two dragon-head terminals supporting the amethyst. The stone is engraved in beautiful, elongated Kufic with knotted, vertical strokes. The surfaces of the ring are articulated with a variety of motifs including an inscription under the mount. A concave ruby is set at the base. The quality and style of this piece suggest that it may have been made in Herat, the renowned center of Timurid culture.

170 Locket

Iran, 11th–12th century
Silver with niello design
Width: 9.5 cm

This locket is decorated in relief with a series of interlocking leaf-shaped panels enclosing Kufic inscriptions and palmettes against a nielloed background. The inscription is a single word, "sovereignty," repeated four times. The faceted finials each have a loop.

This style of decoration is reminiscent of stucco-work of the period, for example in the congregational mosque in Ardistan or on the mosque of Pir-i Bakran (see D. Hill and O. Grabar, *Islamic Architecture and its Decoration*, London, 1964, figs. 273–76). Another example of similar form is in the al-Sabah Collection in the Kuwait National Museum.

◄ 171 Turban Pin

Turkey, early 16th century
Gilded copper set with stones

The tulip-shaped bulb of this pin is studded with colored stones in protruding sockets. Opulent as it seems in its present state, it nevertheless lacks the feathers it would originally have held. Such plumed headgear was worn by the imperial guards and other special military contingents (see E. Atıl, *Turkish Art of the Ottoman Empire*, Washington, D.C., 1973, no.8).




172 Cylindrical Casket

Saudi Arabia (?), 8th–9th century
Ivory with copper fittings
Height: 7.2 cm
Diameter: 8 cm

This is one of the earliest-known types of Islamic ivory caskets. The decoration of red and black circles is produced by inlaying a bituminous substance into engraved designs. The mounts are in copper. The date and geographical attribution of this piece are suggested by another cylindrical box with similar circular motifs in the treasury of St. Gereon in Cologne. That example bears an inscription with the name of the 8th-century Amir Abdullah bin al-Rabi of Aden (see E. Kühnel, *Die Islamischen Elfenbeinsculpturen*, Berlin, 1971, pl.V, nos.18a–b).

◄ 173 Cylindrical Casket

Sicily, 12th century
Ivory, painted, with gilded copper fittings
Height: 15 cm
Diameter: 14.5 cm

Arab amirs ruled Sicily as vassals of the Fatimid caliphs from 909 until 1072. During this period, Palermo rivalled Cordova in magnificence and had a rich, flourishing Islamic culture. After the Normans conquered Sicily in 1072, this dimension of Sicilian tradition was appreciated and fostered by open-minded rulers such as Roger II. Ivory caskets like this one were made in Sicily at this time.

The decoration of the cylindrical container is painted in gold and outlined in dark brown. On the front is an urn-shaped panel fitted with small squares within a vine-pattern border. Around the sides are three vertical lines and arabesques. The lid has four circular medallions painted with geometric motifs. The mounts are in gilded copper.

This is very similar to another casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum (no.425–1906; see P. B. Cott, *Siculo Arabic Ivories*, Princeton University, 1939, no.75).

◄ 174 Rectangular Casket

Sicily, 12th century
Ivory with gilded copper fittings
Length: 18.5 cm
Width: 10.5 cm

The artistic potential and challenge of ivory is partially determined by the natural size-limitation of the elephant's tusks. As a result, many ivory objects consist of small pieces joined together or set in other materials. This exquisite box is constructed of individual plaques fixed with small ivory pegs and reinforced with gilded copper mounts. Dots filled with red and black bituminous paste are engraved around the pegs.

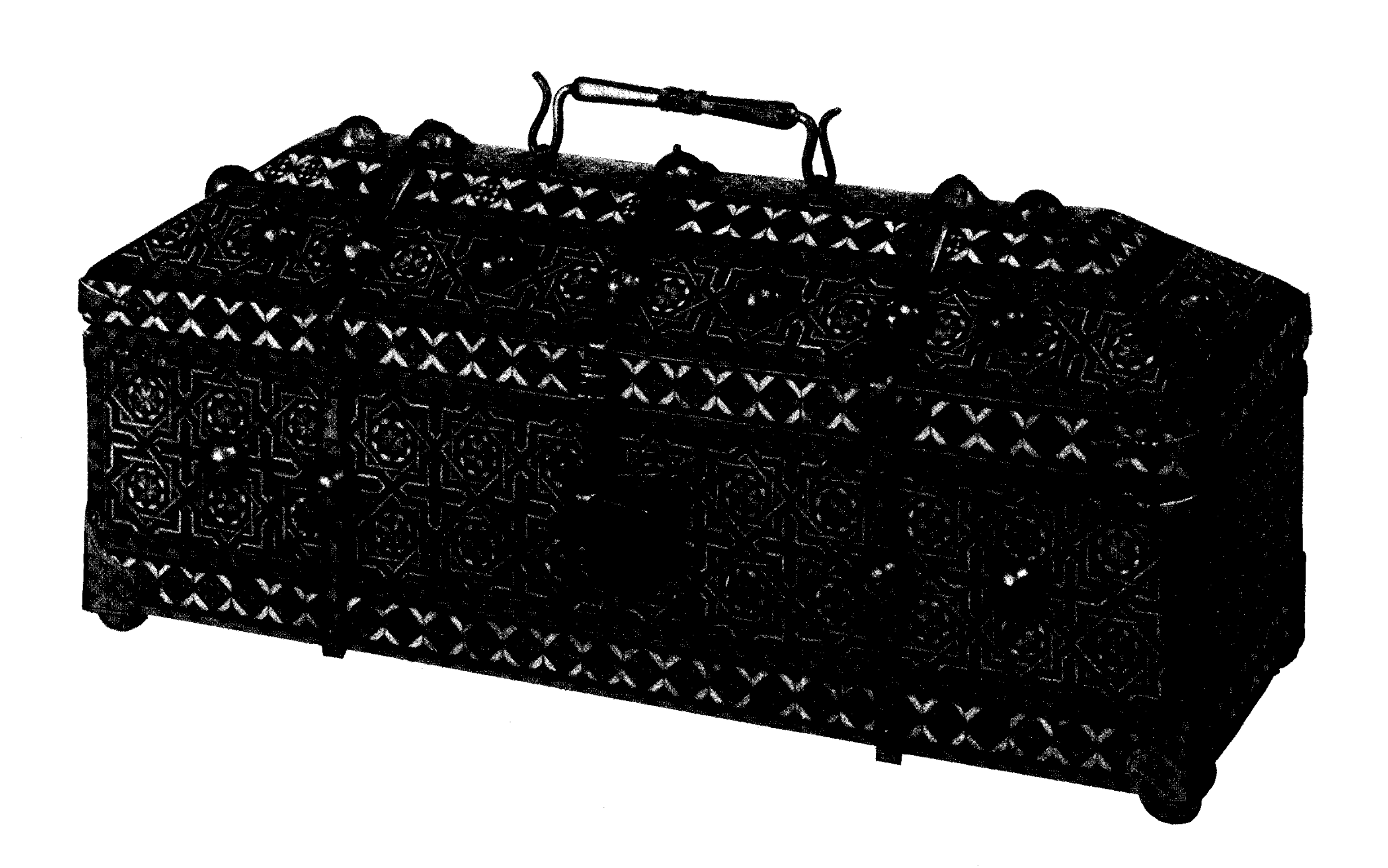


◄ 175 Cylindrical Casket

Egypt, 14th century
Ivory with carved and pierced design
Height with finial: 23.7 cm
Diameter: 14 cm

This is one of an extraordinary small group of cylindrical caskets which have been attributed to both Egypt and Spain. Of other known examples two are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, two in the British Museum, London, and one in the Treasury of the Cathedral of Saragossa, Spain. Two others are recorded, one formerly in the Peytel Collection in France, another formerly in a private collection bearing an inscription giving the name and titles of Sultan Salih who reigned in Cairo between 1351–1354 (see G Migeon, *Exposition Des Arts Musulmans Au Musee Des Arts Decoratifs,* Paris, 1903, pl. 8). This suggests a Mamluk Provenance for the group (see E Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks,* Washington, D.C., 1981, no.106, p.211).

The body is pierced with a fine geometric trellis executed with remarkable precision. Around the lower part, an inscription is carved in low relief and filled with a black bituminous substance. The lid has similar inscriptions on the side and top and is pierced with a radiating trellis design around the central star. The Arabic inscriptions are poetic in nature. The finial is made of turned ivory and wood.



◄ 176 Rectangular Casket

Spain, 14th–15th century
Marquetry with gilded bronze fittings
Length: 37.8 cm
Width: 13.3 cm

The casket is made of wood with intarsio in different colored woods, and plain and stained ivory. The sides and cover have a series of interlaced octagonal stars, enclosing smaller octagons and stars. These are arranged within borders of checkerboard-pattern and narrow borders of stepped crenellation. The mounts are made of gilded bronze with engraved details. This style of decoration was produced in the last period of Moorish domination in Spain, possibly in Granada (see *Islam and the Medieval West*, ed. Stanley Ferber, New York, 1975, no.89).

Provenance: H. R. Ickelheimer Collection
E. Brummer Collection



◄ 177 Cup

Iran or Central Asia, 15th century
Dark green jade
Height: 6.7 cm
Diameter: 7.3 cm

Jade was not used continuously in the Islamic world, but was developed initially under the patronage of Timurid princes in Iran and Afghanistan. Inspiration probably came from Chinese jades, which had long been admired in the Islamic world and included in diplomatic gifts. One of the most extraordinary examples of Timurid jade is the cup made for Ulugh Beg, governor of Samarqand until 1449, which is now in the Fundacao Caluste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, (no.348). A cup in dark green jade with a dragon handle is in the British Museum, London (no.1961 2–13.1).

This example is carved in unadorned, dark green jade with a ring foot and handle in the form of a dragon's head and neck.

◄ 178 Plaque

Carved with the Tughra of Sultan Selim III

Turkey, circa 1789–1807
Bowenite
Height: 25.5 cm
Diameter: 31.8 cm

This simple plaque relies on the inherent beauty of the stone and the carved precision of the Sultan's seal for aesthetic impact. Symbolizing on a document the imperial cognizance of events or decisions, the Tughra as an architectural motif seems almost to imply the royal presence and omniscience. It was possibly intended for display in one of the pavilions of the Topkapi Palace, Istanbul.

Provenance: Sir Charles Marling Collection



◄ 179 Perfume Bottles

Clockwise, starting at top left

a. Iran, 9th century
Colorless glass, wheel-cut with facets
Height: 45 cm

b. Egypt, 9th–10th centuries
Greenish glass, wheel-cut
Height: 7 cm

c. Egypt, 9th century
Greenish glass, mold-blown
Height: 5.8 cm

d. Egypt, 9th century
Emerald-green glass, mold-blown with intaglio, ellipsoid decoration
Length: 8.2 cm

e. Syria, 12th century
Dark blue glass, marvered with yellow and red combed trails
Length: 7 cm

f. Syria, 12th century
Green glass, marvered with white combed trails
Length: 8 cm

Small glass containers were made for precious commodities like perfume. They were cut, blown or molded into a wide variety of shapes. Their visual appeal lies in occasionally-intense colors and decorative effects achieved with various glass-working techniques. Perhaps the most distinctive coloristic effects resulted from marvering. With this process, threads of different colored glass could be combed into patterns and pressed into a molten glass body as in the examples above (eg. e. and f.).

◄ 180 Cosmetic Pot

Egypt, 14th century
Brass, inlaid with silver
Diameter: 4 cm

The undeniable virtuosity of Mamluk metalworkers is evident in this tiny cosmetic pot, arguably the smallest known example of Mamluk inlaid brass.

◄ 181 Cosmetic Pot

Iran, 15th century
Ivory with carved design
Diameter: 3.4 cm

Ivory is well suited to the scale and delicacy of cosmetic pots. The conical lid of this example is carved with a Kufic inscription and culminates in a tiny knob. The body is decorated with an arabesque design.

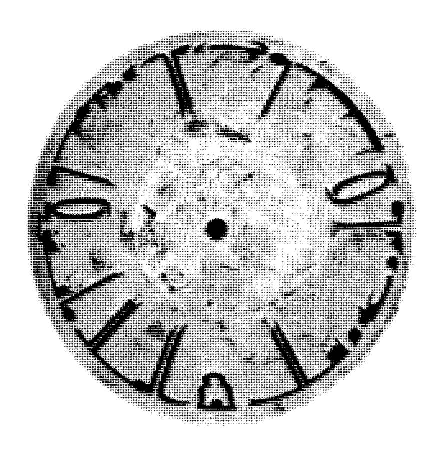


◄ 182 Armor

India, circa 1700
Plate steel with gold decoration, chain mail, silk, brass and horn
Height: 1.33 m
Plate size: 30 cm × 23 cm
Diameter of helmet: 21 cm

The mail shirt, composed of steel links, is reinforced by four body plates, linked by leather straps and two hinged arm guards. The steel plates are cut with designs of scrolling lotus vines within a finely worked gold border of floral design. The gloves are lined in velvet and decorated with brass studs arranged in a trellis design. The helmet is decorated ensuite and has a spike, plume holders, a retractable nose-guard and patterned mail in brass and steel. The axe has a steel head decorated in gold with a gilded repoussé copper handle. The dagger is decorated in gold with a horn handle and has a velvet covered wood scabbard with gilded copper mounts.

For a similar suit of armor, see *Islamic Arms and Armour*, ed. Robert Elgood, London, 1979, pl.245.



"Wealth is to be spent not accumulated,
and beauty is to impress not to frighten, so it is said."

Front and back covers:
Diagrams of Makkah and Medina from
Guide to the Two Sacred Places:
Makkah and Medina, autograph copy of the author,
Ghulam Ali, Jumadi II 990 AH/June 1582 AD,
(see catalogue no.52).